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52-year wait ends: India beat Australia

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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308 dead, 300 missing in Kerala landslides

Rescue efforts on 4th day were hampered by treacherous terrain, shortage of equipment

WAYANAD, 2 AUG

Hopes of finding more than 300 missing people alive in Kerala's Wayanad waned as rescue workers continued to search through mud and debris after landslides set off by torrential rains have killed at least 308 people.

Rescue operations, which entered the fourth day,were widened and also include a drone-based radar to find the survivors.

Over 200 people suffered injuries as rescue efforts were hampered by various challenges, including treacherous terrain due to destroyed roads and bridges, and a shortage of equipment and a shortage of heavy equipment, making it difficult for emergency personnel to clear mud and uprooted trees that fell on houses and other buildings.

Rescue teams on Friday deployed advanced technical gadgets and dogs to pull out possible survivors or remove bodies buried under the debris, even as hands of friendship extended from far corners of the state to the hilly district.

Rescue operations, which entered the fourth day, were widened and also include a drone-based radar to find the survivors.

Raising hopes for life inside a collapsed building, which is thickly covered by mud, rescuers conducting search operations with an advanced radar system in the landslide-hit Mundakkai village have detected a signal indicating breathing.

An official involved in the operation said that a "blue signal" was received on the radar while searching the area where the house was previously located in the severely affected Mundakkai village.

However, the search ended on Friday evening as the rescue personnel concluded a human presence under the debris was unlikely.

Rescue operations continue at the landslide-hit Chooralmala, in Kerala's Wayanad on Friday PHOTO: PTI

- An official involved in the operation said that a "blue signal" was received on the radar.

A three-pronged search operation has also been launched, focusing on the Chaliyar river. The eight police stations, along the 40-km stretch of the river, have joined forces with local swimming experts to search for bodies that may have flown downstream or trapped along the riverbanks.

Meanwhile, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi promised that the Congress party would build more than 100 houses in Wayanad. —*Agencies*

>>>More on Page 4

HUNT ON FOR 50 MISSING IN HIMACHAL

Rescue operations are underway on Friday to trace about 45 people missing following flash floods triggered by cloudbursts in three districts of Himachal Pradesh, officials said on Friday.

With recovery of three more bodies, the death toll due to the flash floods in Nirmand, Sainj and Malana areas in Kullu, Mandi's Padhar and Shimla's Rampur subdivision has increased to eight.

Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu along with Education Minister Rohit Thakur visited Samej on the border of Shimla and Kullu district to take stock of the situation and talk to the victims. Over 30 people were missing after a cloudburst near Shrikhand Mahadev route on Wednesday night triggered flash floods in Sarpara, Ganvi and Kurban nallahs.

Talking to reporters, Sukhu said 17-18 women and 8-9 children are among those missing. The rescue of people is our first priority. He announced an immediate relief of Rs 50,000 for the victims and also said that they would be given Rs 5,000 a month for rent for the next three months along with gas, food and other essential items.

56sq km of W Ghats eco sensitive: Govt

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

Centre has issued a fresh draft notification to declare over 56,800 square kilometres of the Western Ghats across six states, including 13 villages in Kerala's landslide-hit Wayanad, Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA), inviting suggestions and objections within 60 days.

The notification was issued on 31 July, a day after a series of landslides claimed over 300 lives in Wayanad district.

Scientists from the state and beyond attributed the disaster to a deadly mix of forest cover loss, mining in the fragile terrain and climate change.

The draft notification proposes to declare 9,993.7 sq km in Kerala, including 13 villages in two talukas of the landslide-hit district, ecologically sensitive. Overall, the notification includes 449 sq km in Gujarat, 17,340 sq km in Maharashtra, 1,461 sq km in Goa, 20,668 sq km in Karnataka, 6,914 sq km in Tamil Nadu, and 9,993.7 sq km in Kerala in the proposed ESA. According to the fresh draft notification, an expert panel set up in April 2022 to find a breakthrough has held nine meetings since July 2022. The draft notification suggests a complete ban on mining, quarrying, and sand mining, with existing mines to be phased out within five years from the date of issue of the final notification. —*PTI*

Woman ends life over harassment by schoolmates

BENGALURU, 2 AUG

A 31-year-old woman has allegedly committed suicide at her home at Sidedahalli in Bengaluru after facing harassment by her schoolmates. Mamata is suspected to have taken her life on Wednesday, but the incident came to the light on Friday. Mamata's husband, Lokesh, discovered her body hanging from a window when she did not answer the door when he returned home from work on Friday, police said. Mamata's schoolmates Ashok and Ganesh have been booked by Bagalakunte police. Police found a purported suicide note left behind by Mamata which implicated two of her former schoolmates, Ashok and Ganesh, as the cause of her death. —*Salar News*

14 inmates die in 20 days at Delhi shelter home

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

An investigation by a sub divisional magistrate has found that 14 inmates have died at a Delhi government-run shelter home for the specially abled in the past 20 days. A controversy has erupted over the deaths in the shelter home. The official report stated that a total of 25 deaths were recorded from February 2024, out of which 14 deaths occurred (Male-6, Female-8) in the shelter home in the month of July only. The report from Asha Kiran Shelter Home to the Delhi Government mentioned loose motion and unconsciousness as being the reason behind deaths. Minister Atishi said that out of the inmates who died, some had comorbidities. —*PTI*

BBMP OTS scheme for property tax defaulters extended

BENGALURU, 2 AUG

One Time Settlement (OTS) scheme that offers interest waivers and discounted penalties for property tax defaulters has been extended till 31 August, Deputy Chief Minister and Bengaluru Development Minister DK Shivakumar said on Friday. The State government has collected Rs 3,000 crore in property tax from 1 June to 1 August, Shivakumar said after 13th Bengaluru India Nano conference here. "There is a demand from taxpayers and BBMP officers to extend the OTS scheme by a month. There have also been some technical glitches. In this backdrop, we have extended the OTS scheme till 31 August, 2024," he said. —*Salar News*

>>>More on Page 2

NASA to launch India's Shubhanshu to Space Station

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

Group Captains Shubhanshu Shukla and Prasanth Balakrishnan Nair have been selected for an upcoming Indo-US mission to the International Space Station (ISS), the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) announced here on Friday. This has been done on the recommendation of the NASA-identified service provider Axiom Space Inc, sources in the ISRO told. ISRO said its Human Space Flight Centre has entered into a space flight agreement with US' Axiom Space Inc, for its fourth mission to the ISS and a National Mission Assignment Board has "recommended Group Captain Shukla (prime) and Group Captain Nair (backup. —*PTI*

K'taka announces Rs 746 cr aid for flood-affected areas

BENGALURU, 2 AUG

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has announced Rs 746 crore for flood-affected Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, Uttara Kannada and Mangaluru.

The incessant rain completely destroyed a total of 67 houses and partially damaged 176 houses in the State on Thursday and Friday. The government will provide Rs 1.20 lakh compensation and rebuild the completely destroyed houses, while partially damaged houses will receive Rs 50,000 each. A compensation of Rs 35,000 each will be given to farmers who lost their cattle.

Siddaramaiah said 14 relief camps have been set up, housing 186 people across the State. Horticultural crops on 28 hectares have been damaged,

Siddaramaiah PHOTO: PTI

prompting a joint survey by Coffee Board and the Revenue Department. Of 2,708 fallen electric poles, all but 150 have been restored, and 47 damaged transformers have been reinstalled. Furthermore, 344km of public and district panchayat roads have been damaged, with repair work prioritised. The State has received 50% more rainfall than usual in this monsoon season, the Chief Minister's Office said.

- The government has also allocated Rs 1.94 crore to repair 106 government schools .

The Chief Minister asked Deputy Commissioners to complete landslide repair work by December and announced plans to visit Shiradi Ghat to inspect the damage. He said there is a need for a permanent solution to landslide areas, pending a review of the Geological Survey of India report.

The government has also allocated Rs 1.94 crore to repair 106 government schools and Rs 37 lakh for 18 anganwadis damaged by the floods in Dakshina Kannada. —*Salar News*

Indians in Israel cautioned amid escalating tension

TEL AVIV, 2 AUG

The Indian embassy here on Friday advised all Indian nationals in Israel to stay vigilant and adhere to the safety protocols as advised by the local authorities following the escalating tension in the region following the back-to-back assassination of two senior Hamas leaders and a top Hezbollah commander.

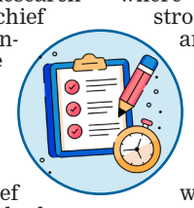
The advisory, posted on all social media platforms of the Embassy, and issued in English, Hindi, Telugu and Kannada, also gave contact details such as telephone numbers +972-547520711 and +972-543278392 along with the email address cons1.telaviv@mea.gov.in for 24X7 help "in case of any emergency". Air India on Friday announced suspending flights to Tel Aviv till 8 August. —*PTI*

AMID NEET ROW

SC allows 7-member panel to reform NTA

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

Supreme Court on Friday expanded the remit of the Centre-appointed seven-member expert panel headed by former Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chief K Radhakrishnan constituted to review the functioning of the National Testing Agency (NTA) and recommend exam reforms.



A bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra gave the detailed reasons for their 23 July order of not scrapping the controversy-ridden NEET-UG 24 examination. The bench was also critical of the conduct of the NTA which holds the NEET. It flagged multiple lapses on the part of NTA like the security breach at an examination centre in Jharkhand's Hazaribagh where the rear door of the strong room was opened and unauthorised people were permitted to access the question papers, transportation of question papers by e-rickshaws and distribution of wrong set of question papers among the candidates. The bench said the remit of the committee shall encompass examination security and administration, data security and technological enhancements. —*PTI*

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GENDER OR RACE?

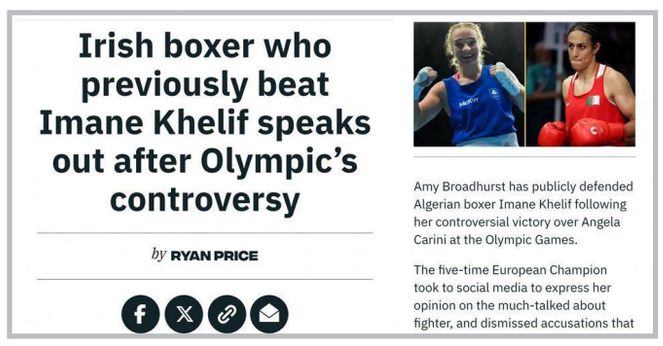
Spotlight on Khelif after Carini quits

PARIS, 2 AUG

The Italian boxer Angela Carini broke down in tears after she abandoned her bout against the Algerian Imane Khelif after 46 seconds in a fight that sparked huge controversy at the Olympics.

Khelif is one of two boxers permitted to fight at the Olympics despite being disqualified from the women's world championships last year for failing gender eligibility tests.

The issue has caused a lot of people to reveal their opinions on the matter. Many believe it is not ok for a person who is considered biologically as strong as a man to compete against a biological woman, as it would give an unfair advantage. Giorgia Meloni, the Italian prime minister,


Irish boxer who previously beat Imane Khelif speaks out after Olympic's controversy
by RYAN PRICE
Amy Broadhurst has publicly defended Algerian boxer Imane Khelif following her controversial victory over Angela Carini at the Olympic Games.
The five-time European Champion took to social media to express her opinion on the much-talked about fighter, and dismissed accusations that

weighed in, saying: "I think that athletes who have male genetic characteristics should not be admitted to women's competitions ... from my point of view it was not an even contest." In highly charged scenes at the North Paris Arena, a first punch from Khelif dislodged Carini's chinstrap and a second smashed against her chin and bloodied her shorts. After multiple punches Carini returned to her corner and raised her hand.

She fell to her knees sobbing and refused to shake Khelif's hand after the Algerian was declared the winner. —*Agencies*

What is Swyer syndrome?

It is a condition where individuals have a typical female appearance and external genitalia but possess XY chromosomes and nonfunctional gonads, often leading to delayed puberty and infertility. Khelif has XY chromosomes, according to a 2023 International Boxing Association eligibility test that got the boxer disqualified from the World Championsh

SC rejects pleas for SIT probe into electoral bonds

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Supreme Court on Friday rejected a batch of pleas seeking a court-monitored investigation into the electoral bonds scheme while observing that it cannot order a roving inquiry.

A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justice JB Pardiwala said it would be "premature" and "inappropriate" to order a probe under a retired judge when the remedies available under the ordinary law governing criminal law procedure have not been invoked.

The top court said it cannot order a roving inquiry into purchase of electoral bonds on the assumption of a quid pro quo for award of contract.

"The court entertained petitions challenging electoral bonds since there was an aspect of judicial review. But the cases involving criminal wrongdoing should not be under Article 32 when there are remedies available under the law," the bench said.

Article 32 empowers a citizen to approach the Supreme Court directly for enforcement of their fundamental rights recognised by the Constitution.

The apex court also declined the prayer of the petitioners to direct the authorities to recover the donations received by political parties through electoral bonds and to reopen their income tax assessment. —*PTI*

8-day padayatra of BJP begins today...

It will cover B'luru, Ramanagara, Mandya & Mysuru

BENGALURU, 2 AUG

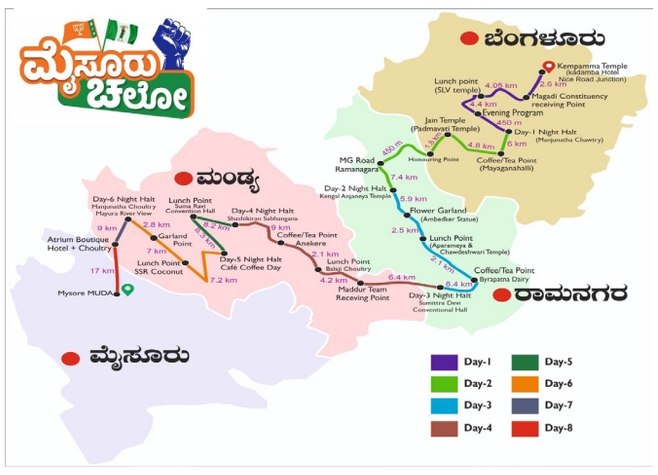
Around 10,000 people will participate daily during the eight-day 'Mysuru Chalo' padayatra carried out by BJP and JD(S) from 3 to 10 August, said State BJP President and MLA BY Vijayendra on Friday.

The padayatra will be launched by former chief minister and BJP leader BS Yeddyurappa, and JD(S) President and Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy, Vijayendra said at BJP's State office, Jagannath Bhawan, in Malleswaram.

The padayatra will start from Manjunatha Convention Hall near Kempamma Devi Temple in Kengeri at 8.30am and end on 10 August at MUDA office in Mysuru. NDA launched the padayatra against alleged 'corruption scandals' of State government and it will cover Bengaluru, Ramanagara, Mandya and Mysuru.

Vijayendra said: "Congress government, led by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, is corrupt and anti-poor.

There is a development vacuum under their rule and they failed Scheduled Communities." Vijayendra urged that the Chief Minister should ensure justice for all 101 castes.



The route map of 'Mysuru Chalo' march of BJP-JD(S)

Criticising the Congress government for holding a Cabinet meeting without the Chief Minister, Vijayendra said it was an attempt to evade addressing the Governor's notice regarding the MUDA site allotment scam.

Vijayendra called Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar "the father of corruption" and demanded accountability from him and Siddaramaiah for scams.

Hitting back at the allegations raised by Vijayendra, Shivakumar said, "There is no meaning or purpose for the padayatra. They are going to expose their scams by doing this padayatra.

"Let them raise corruption issues if they have happened during our tenure. The BJP government was known as the most corrupt government in the history of the State. We will ask them 3-4 questions every day about their scams and injustice to Karnataka in the Union budget, let them answer."

—Salar News

...as DKS kickstarts Congress' agitation

Cong protests at Ramanagara against tax divulsion

BENGALURU, 2 AUG

Congress in Karnataka on Friday staged a demonstration at Bidadi in Ramanagara district against the alleged injustice done to State by Centre including tax divulsion and attempts to destabilse the government.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, who is also the Congress State President, kickstarted the six-day agitation on Friday. He rode a pillion as the party leaders took out a motorcycle rally in the town adjacent to Bengaluru.

The agitation, which the Congress State unit has called 'Janandolana' (people's movement), is also against corruption during the BJP and JD(S) rule in Karnataka.

Shivakumar had directed all the senior leaders, ministers, MPs, MLAs, Legislative Council members, former ministers, former MLAs, Lok Sabha and Assembly, KPCC office-bearers and the district and block Congress Committee presidents and representatives of local bodies to take part in the agitation. The protest will also be held in Ramanagara, Channapatna, Maddur, Mandya and Mysuru.

The demonstrations will take place at the locations from where the proposed BJP and the JD(S) march against the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) scam will pass through from 3 to 10 August. Congress protests also come against the backdrop of a showcause notice issued by Governor Thaawar Chand Gehlot against MUDA site allotment scam in which Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi is a beneficiary. *—PTI*

DyCM DK Shivakumar and supporters took out a bike rally before a public meeting against padayatra by BJP-JD(S), at Bidadi on Friday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

- The agitation by Congress is also against corruption during BJP and JD(S) rule in Karnataka. The protest will also be held in Ramanagara, Channapatna, Maddur, Mandya and Mysuru.

GUV FUNCTIONING AS PUPPET OF CENTRE: BJP-JD(S)

MYSURU, 2 AUG

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday lashed out at Governor Thaawar Chand Gehlot for issuing him a show-cause notice and accused him of functioning as a "puppet" of Central government and BJP-JD(S).

Siddaramaiah described as "illegal and unconstitutional" the issue of notice asking him why sanction for prosecution against him should not be given in the case of alleged irregularities in the distribution of sites by Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA).

Based on a petition filed by advocate-activist TJ Abraham, the Governor issued the notice on 26 July directing the Chief Minister to submit his reply to the allegations against him within seven days justifying why permission to prosecute him should not be granted.

The Chief Minister said he did not attend Thursday's Cabinet meeting because he did not wish to set a "wrong precedent." He had nominated Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar to chair the meeting. "He (Shivakumar) had a detailed meeting on the showcause notice. They (the Ministers at the meeting) said this showcause notice is illegal and it should be withdrawn," Siddaramaiah said.

The Chief Minister also said the Governor should have taken note of Abraham's antecedents. *—PTI*

SC refuses to quash defamation case against TV channel

BENGALURU, 2 AUG

The Supreme Court on Friday refused to quash the defamation case filed by actor-politician Divya Spandana against Asianet News Network and journalist Vishweshwar Bhat. A three-judge bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra declined to interfere with the State High Court order refusing to quash the proceedings."She (Spandana) has been repeatedly mentioned in the bulletin, how can we quash the order? We cannot entertain this," the bench said. The top court was hearing an appeal filed by Asianet New Network and others challenging HC order. *—PTI*

Speed limit set for vehicles on NICE Road

BENGALURU, 2 AUG

As several serious and fatal accidents have taken place on Nandi Infrastructure Corridor Enterprises (NICE) road due to rashness, negligence and over-speeding by vehicle drivers, a speed limit has been fixed in the interest of the safety of road users, police said on Friday. For motor vehicles used for carriage of passengers comprising not more than eight seats in addition to the driver's seat, the speed limit has been fixed at 120 kmph. For motor vehicles with nine or more seats in addition to the driver's seat, it will be 100 kmph. The speed limit for motorcycles and vehicles used for carriage of goods has been set at 80 kmph, they added. *—Salar News*

Siblings jump in front of train, die in Chikkaballapur

SIDLAGHATTA, 2 AUG

Two siblings committed suicide by jumping in front of a train in Sidlaghatta, Chikkaballapur, on Friday. The deceased have been identified as Shila, 23, and her brother Prabhu, 20, residents of Premanagar in Sidlaghatta. Shiva Kumar, Railway Sub Inspector, said that the railway police received information at around 7am about the incident. Soon he rushed to the spot and conducted preliminary investigations. The reason for the two youngsters resorting to extreme step could not be ascertained. However, the local people say that both were feeling sad during the last four months after the untimely death of this mother and they were unable to come to terms to it. Further investigation is in progress, according to the officials. *—Salar News*

Property tax: OTS extended till 31 Aug

BENGALURU, 2 AUG

One Time Settlement (OTS) scheme that offers interest waivers and discounted penalties for property tax defaulters has been extended till 31 August, Deputy Chief Minister and Bengaluru Development Minister DK Shivakumar said on Friday.

The State government has collected Rs 3,000 crore in property tax from 1 June to 1 August, Shivakumar said after 13th Bengaluru India Nano conference here. "There is a demand from taxpayers and BBMP officers to extend the OTS scheme by a month. There have also been some technical glitches. In this backdrop, we have extended the OTS scheme till 31 August, 2024," he said.

This decision comes after taxpayers faced dysfunctional servers a week before the earlier deadline, as the BBMP also acknowledged that the team has been struggling with technical glitches in its property tax payment software for the past week.

A BBMP revenue officer said they had to handle significant public frustration as many waited helplessly because of the technical glitches in the property tax payment website. "We are working with limited servers despite the challenges, as this scheme is also crucial for BBMP's revenue," the officer stated.

Shivakumar said any excess tax paid would be adjusted against future tax payments.

—Salar News

BBMP HELPS WAYANAD

BBMP Employees' Cooperative Association contributed Rs 25 lakh worth of essential items and food to the victims of the flood and landslides in Wayanad, Kerala. BBMP Commissioner Tushar Girinath on Friday flagged off two trucks carrying the aid. This includes around 11 tons of food such as semolina, oil, rice, wheat and sugar, as well as daily necessities like beds, pillows, bed sheets, sweaters and jerkins. More than 20 officers and employees have accompanied the trucks to Wayanad to ensure the delivery of groceries and essential items. **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

CM rejects Kasturirangan report, final decision soon

MADIKERI, 2 AUG

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday said that the State government has decided to reject the Kasturirangan report on the Western Ghats and said the final decision will be taken after discussions with Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre.

The committee on the Western Ghats headed by former ISRO chairman K Kasturirangan has proposed that 37 per cent of the total area of the Western Ghats be declared Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA). The 37 per cent area comes to roughly 60,000 square kilometres. Out of the 60,000 sq km, about 21,000 sq km is in the State.

The report recommends a blanket ban on mining, quarrying, setting up of red category industries and thermal power projects.

Talking to reporters after inspecting the landslide and flood-affected areas here in Madikeri, the district headquarters town of Kodagu district, Siddaramaiah, said, "It has been decided to reject the Kasturi Rangan report. A decision will be made after further discussions with the forest minister."

According to him, landslides have occurred in 20 places, while small-scale landslides have hit many other locations. Fortunately, there have been no casualties, though many people are injured.

Siddaramaiah said 67 houses have been completely destroyed, and 176 houses have been partially damaged. There have also been incidents of complete and partial damage of property in the last 24 hours. *—PTI*

Landslide occurs on Puttur Bypass Road, hits traffic

MANGALURU, 2 AUG

A landslide occurred on Puttur Bypass Road, which is also called Bantwal-Mysuru road and National Highway 275, officials said on Friday.

Quoting local people, they said the landslide occurred at around 3 am on Friday following which vehicles going to Mysuru and Mangaluru started plying through Puttur town.

According to the police, there were no incidents of anybody or any vehicles getting stuck due to the landslide. Barricades have been erected on both approaches to the landslide site, diverting the traffic through Puttur city. The city police have also taken steps to regulate the traffic.

State Highways Department sent excavation machinery and gangs of workers and started clearing the rubble at 8am.

Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre has predicted more rains in the coastal and interior coastal regions, which might hamper clearance work on the affected stretches.

Another landslide occurred in Bellippadi Andhrigeri village in Puttur at 4.30 am, following which two houses and a cowshed were badly damaged and four cows tied in the shed died under the rubble.

According to the Purandhara Tahsildar of Puttur taluk, a part of the hill behind the houses and the cowshed collapsed and crushed the structures under tons of soil.

Meanwhile, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday visited and inspected the landslide area of Srimangala Kutta in Ponnampet taluk in the district and held discussions with officials and locals.

More than 20 families have lost their homes due to the collapse of the hill during the last week of July.

—PTI

Illegal homestays in Western Ghats to be razed

BENGALURU, 2 AUG

State Forest Department has ordered demolishing homestays, layouts and resorts which encroached on the forest land in Western Ghats since 2015. The order, announced on Friday, covers Chikkamagaluru, Shivamogga, Mysuru, Chamarajanagar, Belagavi, Dakshina Kannada, Uttara Kannada, Udupi, Kodagu and Hassan.

Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre has asked for a report on the progress of the action within a month.

The directive comes in the wake of landslides at Shirur in Uttara Kannada and Wayanad. The Forest Minister said these events are a dire warning about the need to protect the Western Ghats, otherwise it might ring in severe consequences.

PHOTO: PTI

Besides, Mangaluru-based National Environment Care Federation (NECF) has called on both Central and Karnataka governments to implement the recommendations of the Madhav Gadgil Committee report, which has been pending approval for 14 years. The report warned against construction, indiscriminate quarrying and forest land encroachments in Ecologically Sensitive Areas in Western Ghats. NECF Secretary Shashidha said the committee recommendations were not fully adopted and urged a halt to unscientific projects and strict implementation of the Gadgil report. *—Salar News*

State withdrew GST notice, says Infosys

BENGALURU, 2 AUG

Infosys says that the State authorities are withdrawing the pre-show cause GST notice issued to Infosys with a tax demand of Rs 32,403 crore, the company informed the exchange in a filing on Friday,

"The Company has received a communication from State authorities, withdrawing the pre-show cause notice and has directed the Company to submit a further response to DGGI Central authority on this matter," said Infosys

The Company responded to the pre-show cause notice and stated that the Company believes that as per regulations, GST is not applicable to these expenses.

"Additionally, as per a recent Circular (circular number 210/4/2024 dated 26 June, 2024) issued by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs on the recommendations of the GST Council, services provided by the overseas branches to Indian entity are not subject to GST," said the company.

The clarification from Infosys came post news articles published on Wednesday for non-payment of GST towards expenses incurred by the overseas branches of the Company.

—ANI

KSDC TO FACILITATE MALE NURSES TO LAND JOBS IN UAE

BENGALURU, 2 AUG

Karnataka Skill Development Corporation (KSDC) has launched a programme to help male nursing graduates from Karnataka secure well-paid nursing jobs in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Medical Education, Skill Development, and Livelihood Minister Sharan Prakash Patil said on Friday that KSDC, in coordination with Union Ministry of External Affairs, is meeting the human resource demands of European, Gulf and other countries. "We are taking applications for the male nursing graduates with no recruitment charges and the candidates who manage to get through the interview will receive a remuneration of up to Rs 1.11 lakh per month and online interviews for these positions will be completed by this month," he said.

Nursing graduates with over two years of experience can apply online for the UAE positions. Candidates must register on the KSDC website (http://imck.kaushalkar.com) and send their CVs and related documents to hr.imck@gmail.com.

The recruitment is carried out in two steps. In the first round, KSDC will shortlist the profiles as per the nursing guidelines received from hospitals in the UAE and conduct a physical interview. In the second round, KSDC will forward the screened profiles to the hospitals having vacancies. The hospitals will then conduct online interviews for candidates.

For more information, candidates can contact 9606492213/9606492214 or visit International Migration Centre – Karnataka (IMC-K), located on the 4th Floor, Kalyana Suraksha Bhavan, ITI College Campus, Dairy Circle, Bannerghatta Main Road, Bengaluru – 560029.

—Salar News

CRITICAL AREAS

Siddaramaiah bats for nanotechnology-based solutions

BENGALURU, 2 AUG

Robust international collaboration and a strong link between academia, industry and research are needed to advance nanotechnology in critical areas such as food and energy security, water purification, healthcare and waste management, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said on Friday.

He was speaking at the inauguration of the 13th edition of Bengaluru India Nano, which aims to create a congenial ecosystem for the growth of nanotechnology.

CM Siddaramaiah with Bharata Ratna prof CNR Rao during the Bengaluru India Nano meet, in Bengaluru on Friday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

"Our State is always in the forefront with respect to technology-based innovations. I am confident that, with the support of premier research institutions like Indian Institute of Science, Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR), National Centre for Biological Sciences, Centre for Nano and Soft Matter Sciences, etc, the City will be transformed into nanotech hub of India and will keep up its eminent position in this emerging technology in the years to come," he said.

He urged scientists and engineers to make use of the opportunities and come up with innovative nanotechnology-based solutions for food security, energy security, water purification, infrastructure, medicine, healthcare and waste management as well as to combat environmental hazards.

At the inaugural event, Prof C NR Rao, honorary chairman of Vignan Institute of Technology and Science (VGNT) and honorary president of JNCASR, Bengaluru, was felicitated by Siddaramaiah, to mark his 90th birthday.

The three-day event is on till 3 August. *—PTI*

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

TMC leader held in ration distribution scam in WB

KOLKATA, 2 AUG

The Enforcement Directorate arrested a Trinamool Congress leader from Deganga in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district for his alleged links to a multi-crore ration distribution scam, an officer said on Friday. The central probe agency arrested TMC's Deganga block president Anisur Rehman and his elder brother late on Thursday after grilling them for nearly 14 hours at their Kolkata office, he said. Rehman had been "very close" to former state forest minister Jyotipriyo Mallick, who has been arrested by the central probe agency in connection with the scam. The ED officers have issued a summons to Barik Biswas, a rice mill owner and another close aide of the former minister, to appear for questioning on Friday, the officer said. *—PTI*

J'Khand Assembly passes Bill to levy cess on minerals

RANCHI, 2 AUG

The Jharkhand Assembly on Friday passed a Bill to impose cess on mined minerals to boost the State's revenue. This move follows the Supreme Court's 25 July ruling, which affirmed that the legislative power to tax mineral rights rests with the States. Mining Minister in-charge Mithilesh Thakur introduced the 'Jharkhand Mineral-Bearing Land Cess Bill 2024', which was approved by voice vote. The Bill proposes varying tax rates for different minerals on a per-metric-tonne basis: Rs 100 for coal and iron ore, Rs 70 for bauxite, and Rs 50 for manganese ore and other minerals. AJSU legislator Lambodar Mahto and CPI (ML) legislator Vinod Kumar Singh suggested sending the Bill to a Select Committee due to technical concerns. *—PTI*

HC dismisses Bibhav's plea against arrest

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

The Delhi High Court on Friday dismissed a plea moved by Arvind Kejriwal's close aide Bibhav Kumar seeking direction to declare his arrest by Delhi Police as illegal. The bench of Justice Neena Bansal Krishna on Friday passed the Judgement. Appearing for Bibhav, senior advocate N Hariharan submitted that FIR was registered after a delay of three days. "I (Bibhav Kumar) put an anticipatory bail, while around 4.00-4.30pm, it is being heard; I am arrested around 4.15pm. My fundamental right to be arrested in such a fashion was exploited and hence, I am here," the plea said. *—PTI*

Puducherry CM presents ₹12Kcr tax-free Budget

PUDUCHERRY, 2 AUG

Puducherry Chief Minister N Rangasamy on Friday presented a Rs 12,700 crore tax-free Budget for the fiscal 2024-2025. Rangasamy, who holds the Finance portfolio, also stated that the Union Territory's own receipts have been estimated at Rs 6,914.66 crore while the Central assistance including State Disaster Relief fund was Rs 3,268.98 crore. The Central road fund has been estimated at Rs 20 crore while allocation under Centrally-sponsored schemes was Rs 430 crore. Rangasamy said that he was extremely happy to present his fourth budget in the fifteenth Legislative Assembly. Centre had conveyed its approval for the net borrowing ceiling to the extent of Rs 2,066.36 crore "to bridge our fiscal deficit," he said. He said out of budget estimate of Rs 12,700 crore, a sum of Rs 10,969.80 crore had been allocated for revenue expenditure and Rs 1,730.20 crore for capital expenditure. *—PTI*

Rahul claims ED raid planned against him

He says an ED 'insider' informed him about it as he upset people over 'chakravyuh' remark

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Friday claimed that an Enforcement Directorate raid is being planned against him after his 'chakravyuh' speech in Parliament.

BJP dismissed his claim saying he is creating a new narrative to distract people from asking about his accountability as the MP from Wayanad following the devastating landslide tragedy there.

In a post on X early Friday, Gandhi said, "Apparently, 2 in 1 didn't like my Chakravyuh speech. ED insiders' tell me a raid is being planned."

"Waiting with open arms @ dir_ed ..Chai and biscuits on me," he said.

In another development, Congress MP Manickam Tagore submitted a notice to move an adjournment motion on "the BJP government's misuse of agencies like the ED, CBI, and Income Tax for political harassment".

"The Opposition condemns the BJP government's misuse of agencies like the ED, CBI, and Income Tax for political harassment. Despite their reduced number from 303 to 240 seats and the reliance on alliances with TDP and JDU, government continues to deploy then to intimidate Opposition and force compliance, undermining democratic principles. This misuse of power is unacceptable and threatens the integrity of our institutions," the notice read.

Opposition rallied behind Gandhi and accused the government of "misusing" probe agencies. Rashtriya Loktantrik Party and Nagaur MP Hanuman Ramdev Beniwal said Gandhi was right and probe agencies are being misused in the Parliament. Independent MP Pappu Yadav said the tendency of the government is to scare people. AAP MP Sanjay Singh said the government's intention of putting ED and CBI could be because of Gandhi exposing the government.

Using the 'chakravyuh' metaphor, Gandhi claimed that an atmosphere of fear prevails all around with a group of six trapping the entire country in a 'chakravyuh'. Meanwhile, Congress moved an Adjournment Motion seeking a discussion on misuse of Central agencies. *—PTI*

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, AICC General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, and party leader KC Venugopal visit a landslide-hit area, in Wayanad district, on Friday *PHOTO: PTI*

'RaGa trying to escape accountability in Wayanad'

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

BJP took a swipe at Rahul Gandhi for his claim that an ED raid is being planned against him, saying he is creating a new narrative to distract people from asking about his accountability as the MP from Wayanad following the devastating landslide tragedy there.

He might have been told that people are asking questions about his accountability so he has sought to create a new narrative, BJP leader and former Union minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar told reporters.

Gandhi has raised an imaginary issue to avoid questions related to Wayanad, he said, People are asking about his accountability, he claimed.

Union minister was sharp in his take on the Leader of Opposition's claim, saying Gandhi might have done something which he believes might result in such an action.

"If someone does no wrong, then why will anything happen," he told reporters.

Gandhi was elected from Wayanad in the 2019 and 2024 polls. He gave up Wayanad this time and retained Rai Bareli, another constituency he was elected from. Congress has announced that his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra will contest in the by-poll, which is yet to be announced. Chandrasekhar said the death of over 300 people, mostly poor, in the disaster is not just a tragedy but a crime. He blamed the successive state governments since 2009 for this negligence in "commercial interest" and said the people of Wayanad have borne the cost. He also slammed the Left government for a move to bar science and technology institutions for sharing opinion and study reports regarding the tragedy. *—PTI*

Rajeev Chandrasekhar *PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA*

NTA PULLED UP

Cannot order NEET re-exam as no proof of systemic leak: SC

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

The Supreme Court on Friday said it did not cancel the controversy-ridden NEET-UG 2024 examination amid concerns of paper leak because there was no systemic breach of its sanctity.

In its detailed reasons for the order which was pronounced on 23 July, a bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra said the National Testing Agency (NTA) must stop its flip-flop which was noticed this year as it does not serve the interest of students.

"We did not cancel the NEET-UG examination because there was no systemic breach of sanctity of the exam beyond Hazaribagh and Patna," the bench said.

It issued a slew of directions and expanded the remit of the Centre-appointed panel headed by former ISRO chief K Radhakrishnan to review the NTA's functioning and recommend exam reforms.

The top court said since the remit of the panel has been expanded, the committee would submit its report by September 30 on various measures to rectify deficiencies in the examination system.

The bench said panel should consider framing standard operating procedure for adoption of technological advancements to strengthen the examination system.

It said the issues which have arisen should be rectified by the Centre.

On 23 July, the top court dismissed the pleas seeking cancellation and re-test of the exam, holding that there was no evidence on record to conclude that it was "vitiated" on account of "systemic breach" of its sanctity. *—PTI*

> **The cloud of lies may hide the sun of truth for some time, but truth always wins. Findings and the verdict outrightly rejects the propaganda that was being peddled**
>
> -Dharmendra Pradhan, Education Minister

Resolution seeking repeal of NEET, NTA introduced in Rajya Sabha

A private member resolution asking the government to bring a law to remove education from the concurrent list, and repeal NEET and NTA to allow states to conduct medical entrance tests was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on Friday. DMK member M Mohamed Abdulla moved the resolution during the private member business in the afternoon session of the Rajya Sabha amid opposition from the government, contending it would be against the Supreme Court's verdict on the NEET issue. *—PTI*

A media report stated that the parcel of 665 hectares of land within which the project site falls, is recorded as a forest *PHOTO: PTI*

Mirzapur plant doesn't involve forest area: Govt

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

The proposed 1600-megawatt coal-based ultra-supercritical thermal power project (TPP) in Uttar Pradesh's Mirzapur does not involve forest land but 8.35 hectares forest land would be required outside the project area for a water pipeline and road access, the government has told Parliament.The National Green Tribunal earlier this week took suo motu notice of a media report which said the parcel of 665 hectares of land in Dadri Khurd in the eastern Uttar Pradesh district, within which the project site falls, is recorded as a 'forest' according to a gazette notification issued in 1952. It is still pending notification under Section 20 of the Indian Forest Forest, 1927.

In response to a question by Trinamool Congress MP Mausam Noor, Union Minister of State for Environment Kirti Vardhan Singh said, "The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is in receipt of proposal from Mirzapur Thermal Energy (UP) Private Limited seeking terms of reference for preparation of environment impact assessment (EIA) report under the provisions of EIA Notification, 2006 as amended for setting up of 2x800 MW coal based ultra super critical thermal power project at village Dadri Khurd, Tehsil, Mirzapur Sardar, District Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh. Total project area is 365.19 Ha and no forest land is involved." *—PTI*

4.43cr MGNREGS job cards deleted in last 5 years

More than 4.43 crore MGNREGS job cards have been deleted since the 2019-20 fiscal, the government said on Friday. Union Minister of State for Rural Development Kamlesh Paswan provided the information in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha. *—PTI*

Heatstroke took 374 lives till 27 July

A total 374 deaths due to heatstroke and 67,637 cases of suspected heatstroke were reported from 1 March to 27 July, Minister of State for Health Anupriya Patel said. Uttar Pradesh was the worst-affected with 52 deaths, followed by Bihar. States and Union Territories are submitting data on heat stroke cases on the Integrated Health Information Portal since 2023, Patel said. *—PTI*

New Parl design needs to be reviewed: Gogoi

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

Congress' Deputy Leader in the Lok Sabha Gaurav Gogoi on Friday called for a review of the design, construction and facilities within the new Parliament building and hoped that views of all major parties will be taken in due time.

Gogoi also asserted that there is much to be done in order for the new Parliament building to "reflect the greatest traditions of Indian parliamentary democracy".

"The design, construction and facilities within the new Indian parliament needs to be reviewed. There is much to be done in order for it to reflect the greatest traditions of Indian parliamentary democracy," Gogoi said in a post on X.

"The Parliament belongs to the people of India and not to one party or one individual. I hope that the views of all major parties will be taken in due time," he said. His remarks come a day after Opposition leaders took a swipe at Centre over "water leakage" in a lobby of the new Parliament building. *—PTI*

Jairam moves privilege motion against Shah

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Friday submitted a notice to move a privilege motion against Union Home Minister Amit Shah, alleging that he "misled" the Rajya Sabha by his emphatic statements on early warnings issued by the Centre to the Kerala government ahead of the Wayanad landslides "which have been proven to be false".

Congress leaders Jairam Ramesh and Union Home Minister Amit Shah *PHOTO: PTI*

Ramesh said that in his response to a Calling Attention on the Wayanad landslides in the Rajya Sabha on 31 July, 2024, the home minister made several claims on early warning systems and how they were not utilised by the Kerala government inspite of alerts issued by the Union government well ahead of the tragedy.

Shah had on Wednesday told that the Centre had sent multiple advance warnings, starting as early as 23 July, to the Kerala government, however, the Kerala government did not heed to the advance warnings. *—PTI*

FINANCIAL PRESSURE

T'gana needs to repay debt of Rs 2.67L cr in 10 yrs: CAG

HYDERABAD, 2 AUG

The Telangana government is obligated to repay over Rs 2.67 lakh crore loans borrowed from the market, both principal and interest by FY33, even as the Gross State Domestic Product (at current prices) grew at an average growth rate of 15.09 per cent from Rs 8.60 lakh crore in 2018-19 to Rs 13.13 lakh crore in 2022-23, said Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report on Friday.

According to the report (for 2022-23) by CAG which was placed in the state legislature, besides market borrowings, the state government will also have a liability to repay Rs 19,210 crore as principal in the next nine years in respect of borrowings taken from some financial institutions such as National Small Saving Fund and LIC. The borrowings of the State governments are governed by Article 293 of the Constitution as they borrow money from the market for implementation of various state plan programmes and fulfilment of fiscal liabilities.

Revanth Reddy *PHOTO: PTI*

The figures suggest that the state government will have to mobilise substantial amount, over Rs 2.86 lakh crore, by 2032-33 for servicing of public debt and this could put significant pressure on the state finances, CAG opined.

Considering the off-Budget borrowings (OBB) Rs 1.19 lakh crore and other liabilities for the year 2022-23, which are being serviced out of the State Budget, the ratio of Debt to GSDP would be 35.64 per cent, which is 10.64 per cent above the set target of 25 per cent as per the TSFRBM Act (Telangana State FRBM), the report said. This is also 5.94 per cent above the limit (29.70 per cent) prescribed by the XV Finance Commission, it further said. During 2022-23, the government resorted to Ways and Means Advances for almost the entire year, except 24 days. *—PTI*

Didi urges FM to waive GST on life insurance

KOLKATA, 2 AUG

Calling the Centre's decision to impose 18 per cent GST on life insurance and health insurance policies as anti-people, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday wrote to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman urging her to roll it back.

The primary objective of life and health insurance is to provide financial security and support during unexpected times such as illness, accidents, and untimely deaths, she said in the letter.

"With deep anguish, I am writing to you regarding the imposition of 18 per cent GST on life insurance and health insurance policies/products and the withdrawal of deductions in the new tax regime under sections 80C and 80D of the Income Tax Act, which, to me, are highly anti-people in nature," the letter read.

The imposition of GST on insurance premiums increases the financial burden on the common people, she said.

"This additional burden may be acting as (a) deterrent for many individuals from taking new policies or continuing their existing insurance coverage, thereby leaving them vulnerable to unforeseen financial distress," she added.

She requested Sitharaman to review the "anti-people taxation policies" and withdraw GST on life insurance and health insurance premiums, said Banerjee, also the Trinamool Congress supremo. *—PTI*

Mamata Banerjee *PHOTO: ANI*

Oppn raises concern over 'inadequate' allocation to health

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

Opposition members on Friday slammed the healthcare facilities in rural parts of the country, alleged irregularities in the Ayushman Bharat initiative and demanded the government increase expenditure in the health sector.

Initiating a discussion on the Demand for Grants of the Health Ministry, Congress member Tariq Anwar said the National Health Policy-2017 had set a target to increase spending on healthcare to up to 2.5 per cent of the GDP.

He said the government spending on healthcare, however, is on a decline and the number of AIIMS opened in different States were lacking in infrastructure forcing patients to come to AIIMS-Delhi. He also alleged that the inadequacies of the healthcare sector were exposed during the Covid-19 pandemic. *—PTI*

Tripura to relocate land customs stn as B'desh objects

AGARTALA, 2 AUG

The Tripura government has decided to relocate a land customs station (LCS) from Manughat to Murticherra in Unakoti district following objection of the Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) to expansion of the existing facility, an official said. Around 100 acres of land was acquired for building warehouse, parking area among other facilities at Manughat LCS and the foundation stone was laid by former state industries minister Tapan Chakraborty but work could not progress as the BGB protested the proposed facelift, citing the Indira-Mujib Pact which stated that no construction activity could be undertaken within 150 yards of the international border. To explore the feasibility of a new location for the existing LCS, an administrative team headed by Deputy Director of Industries and Commerce Department, Swapan Mitra, visited a spot near Murticherra, around 10 km from the existing LCS. At Murticherra, around 12 acres of land are available for relocation of the LCS.—*PTI*

3 vehicles crushed as hoarding collapses in Thane

THANE, 2 AUG

A hoarding collapsed in Maharashtra's Thane district on Friday morning, crushing three vehicles, an official said. There are no reports of any injuries so far in the accident that occurred around 10.30 am at the busy Sahajanand Chowk in the Kalyan area, he said. Kalyan Tehsildar Sachin Shejal said the hoarding came crashing down on three vehicles parked below it. A team has been sent to the spot and rescue operations are underway, he said, ruling out the possibility of anyone being trapped under it. —*PTI*

Khedkar's mom gets bail in criminal intimidation case

PUNE, 2 AUG

A Pune court on Friday granted bail to former IAS trainee officer Puja Khedkar's mother Manorama in an attempt to murder case which was filed after she was seen in a video allegedly brandishing a gun while confronting a group of people over a land dispute. Additional Sessions Judge AN Mare granted bail to Manorama Khedkar, a fortnight after she was arrested, and imposed a set of conditions on her, said her counsel advocate Sudhir Shah. The Judge, while allowing the bail application, stated in the order that Manorama Khedkar be released on executing a personal bond of Rs 50,000 with one or more sureties of the same amount. The court asked the accused not to influence witnesses and cooperate in the investigation of the case. The order also stated that the applicant shall not enter the jurisdiction of Pune's Paud police station, where the case has been registered, till the investigation was completed and cooperate in the ongoing probe.—*PTI*

ED conducts 1st ever raids in Ladakh

SRINAGAR, 2 AUG

In its first ever raids in the Union Territory of Ladakh, the Enforcement Directorate on Friday conducted searches as part of its money laundering probe linked to a fake cryptocurrency operator, officials said. The agency raided at least six premises in Leh in Ladakh, Jammu and Sonipat in Haryana in the case against AR Mir and others. It is alleged that thousands of investors deposited money in a fake currency but did not get any returns or currency back. The money laundering case stems from several FIRs registered in Leh and in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.—*PTI*

Landslide: Kerala junks gag order on scientists

CM claims that orders directing scientists not to visit landslide sites were misleading

Army personnel with sniffer dog during a search and rescue operation at a landslide-hit area in Wayanad on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

T'PURAM WAYANAD, 2 AUG

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has directed Chief Secretary V Venu to withdraw a controversial note issued by the State Disaster Management Authority, which restrained science and technology institutions in the state from sharing their opinions and study reports with the media regarding the recent deadly landslides in Wayanad.

In a statement on Thursday night, Vijayan said the news that the State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) had directed scientific institutions and scientists not to visit the disaster-affected Meppadi Panchayat in Wayanad and not to express their opinions was misleading.

Earlier, the scientific community had strongly protested against the note prepared by State Relief Commissioner and Principal Secretary, Disaster Management, Tinku Biswal, which directed all science and technology institutions in the state not to undertake any field visits to Meppadi Panchayat in Wayanad, where several people were killed in the devastating landslides on Tuesday.

The note had said that the scientific community should restrain themselves from sharing their opinions and study reports with the media.

It also stated that prior permission from the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority was required to undertake any studies in the disaster-affected area.

121-member team to provide psychosocial support

A Mental Health Disaster Management team has been formed in Kerala to provide psychosocial support to survivors of the devastating landslide at Wayanad, where over 200 people lost their lives and almost as many are still missing, state Health Minister Veena George said on Friday.

George said a 121-member team of psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, psychiatric social workers and counsellors was formed on Tuesday, soon after the disaster struck the hilly district of Kerala.

The team will also identify those who have mental health issues and ensure that their treatment is not interrupted.

—*PTI*

RaGa urges Delhi to treat Wayanad tragedy differently

WAYANAD, 2 AUG

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Friday described the landslides in Wayanad district of Kerala as a "terrible tragedy" of such magnitude that the state has not seen till now in a single area, and said that it should be treated differently.

The Congress MP said he is going to raise the matter in Delhi and also with Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan as "this is a different level of tragedy and should be treated differently".

Right now the focus is on finding the bodies and potential survivors, making sure the displaced persons are comfortable in the camps, and rehabilitating them, he said.

The Congress MP said that rehabilitation is going to be very important, as a lot of the survivors told him they did not want to go back to the landslide-hit areas.

"So, I think it is important that they are rehabilitated in a safe area and are not forced to go back. These are the things that we have already raised with the Government of Kerala," he said.

He also promised that the Congress party would build more than 100 houses in Wayanad.

—*PTI*

Flash floods triggered by cloudburst also washed away two houses **PHOTO: PTI**

Fear of death kept us awake: HP survivors

SHIMLA, 2 AUG

Fear of death kept us awake all night as we climbed to a mountain to stay safe, residents of Rajban village in Himachal Pradesh's Mandi district said on Friday, two days after a cloudburst left three people dead and seven missing.

Flash floods triggered by cloudburst also washed away two houses and damaged another in this village near Terang in the Padhar subdivision on Wednesday night.

"Bodies of my father-in-law and mother-in-law have been recovered but my son, my brother-in-law, his wife and their six-year-old son and two-month-old daughter are still missing," a wailing woman told PTI Videos.

"I live above the hill but my son was with his grandparents," she added.

"We rushed out of our houses after hearing screams of people and found that houses nearby have been swept in landslides and flash floods," another villager said.

"Fear of death kept us awake all night as we climbed to a mountain to stay safe," the villager added.

Damaged houses, wailing relatives with fading hope narrated a tale of horror in the Sanej area of Rampur subdivision of Shimla district, where over 30 people are missing after the disaster struck. —*PTI*

GPS coordinates, aerial drone pictures used by rescuers to locate survivors

WAYANAD, 2 AUG

Rescue operation underway for the third consecutive day after recent landslides triggered by heavy rainfall, in Wayanad **PHOTO: PTI**

Rescue teams used GPS coordinates from aerial drone pictures and cell phones, including the last location of people who lived in the landslides-hit areas of Wayanad on Friday to help locate survivors trapped under the debris, amidst accelerated search operations after the completion of the 190-foot-long Bailey bridge by the Army.

A family of four was rescued from an isolated house in an area near Padavetti Kunnu on the fourth day of the deadly landslides, giving hope to hundreds of rescuers, racing against time to search for survivors. With nearly 300 persons still missing, the death toll is expected to go up.

The search and rescue operations that resumed early morning received an impetus as the Bailey bridge helped the rescue teams to move the heavy machinery, including excavators, and ambulances to the worst-affected Mundakkai and Chooralmala hamlets.

According to official sources, the extent of human loss will emerge when rescuers clear houses covered by debris and wooden logs using heavy machinery. Authorities reported that many more body parts had been collected and genetic testing was underway to identify the remains. Earlier in the day, Kerala ADGP M R Ajith Kumar said 300 people were still missing. Around 40 rescue teams along with cadaver dogs are conducting search operations in six zones of the landslides-hit areas -- Attamala and Aaranmala (first), Mundakkai (second), Punchirimattam (third), Vellarimala village (fourth), GVHSS Vellarimala (fifth), and riverbank (sixth), officials said.

In addition to this, a three-pronged search operation has also been launched, focusing on the Chaliyar river. The eight police stations, along the 40-km stretch of the river, have joined forces with local swimming experts to search for bodies that may have flown downstream or trapped along the riverbanks.

Amidst the despair, an elderly tea stall owner from Kollam, Subaida, has exemplified the expression of humanity. She selflessly donated her meagre earnings and welfare pension to help those who lost everything in the devastating landslides that hit Wayanad. —*PTI*

IAF choppers join rescue operations in U'khand

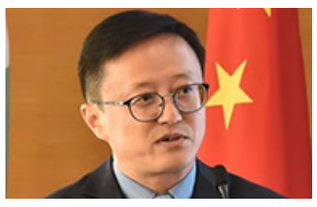
The IAF's Chinook and MI17 helicopters on Friday joined the rescue operations in Uttarakhand to evacuate pilgrims still stranded on the rain-ravaged trek route to Kedarnath. Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said since the start of rescue operations on Thursday morning altogether 5,000 people have so far been evacuated to safety.
They have either been airlifted or rescued manually by the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel, he said.

Flights hit after flooding in Bengal airport

Flight operations to and fro Kazi Nazrul Islam (KNI) airport were temporarily suspended on Friday due to water logging problem in and around the airport premises caused due to incessant rainfall overnight, officials said. Around three flights to and fro the airport, including one from New Delhi and another from Bengaluru, had to be cancelled for the day, an official said, adding that this region recorded 192 mm rainfall which caused the problem. The passengers were informed about the problem with ample time in hand to minimise the inconvenience caused to them.

'China ready to work with India'

MUMBAI, 2 AUG



Kong Xianhua **PHOTO: PTI**

Chinese Consul General in Mumbai Kong Xianhua has said his country is ready to work with India to bridge the gap between the people of the two neighbours, recalling the Indian help during the Sino-Japanese war.

The senior diplomat on Thursday visited the Indian Coast Guard Headquarters (West) to express gratitude to the maritime security agency for saving Chinese mariners over the past two years, an official statement said.

Kong met Inspector General Bhisham Sharma, Commander of Indian Coast Guard (West), and said China is ready to work with India friends to bridge the gap between the people of the two countries and strengthen friendship. The Indian Coast Guard and Indian Navy have jointly carried out a successful rescue mission to evacuate a Chinese mariner who was critically injured and suffering heavy blood loss on 24 July, the statement said.

"The Indian Coast Guard responded immediately to the medical emergency. The rescue team overcame the strong wind and high waves to evacuate him to hospital. Thanks to the Indian Coast Guard's prompt rescue and professional treatment, the mariner recovered very well and has already been back to China," Kong said.

"Today I come here on behalf of the Chinese Consulate General in Mumbai to express my heartfelt gratitude to you and all the officers and pay my highest tribute to the Indian Coast Guard," Kong told IG Sharma, as per the statement said. —*PTI*

MURDER PLOT ROW

US expects accountability from India over Pannun

WASHINGTON, 2 AUG

The US has said it expects accountability from India concerning the alleged role of an Indian government employee in the failed attempt to assassinate a Sikh separatist on US soil last summer.

In November last year, US federal prosecutors charged Indian national Nikhil Gupta with working with an Indian government employee in the foiled plot to kill Sikh separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, who holds dual American and Canadian citizenship, in New York.

Gupta, who was arrested in the Czech Republic in June last year, was extradited to the US on 14 June.

India has denied the allegations but has constituted an internal investigations team to look into it.

The US, however, declined to comment on a news report alleging that Canadian authorities claim to have arrested five Indian nationals planning to target a Sikh separatist at a wedding ceremony. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

- In November last year, US federal prosecutors charged Indian national Nikhil Gupta with working with an Indian government employee in the foiled plot to kill Sikh separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, who holds dual American and Canadian citizenship, in New York.

Meitei, Hmars sign peace deal for Manipur district

IMPHAL, 2 AUG

Representatives of Meitei and Hmar communities agreed to make full efforts to restore normalcy in violence-hit Jiribam district of Manipur.

The agreement was reached between the warring sides at a meeting held at a CRPF facility in adjoining Assam's Cachar on Thursday. The meeting was moderated by Jiribam district administration, Assam Rifles and CRPF personnel, officials said. Representatives of Thadou, Paite and Mizo communities of Jiribam district were also present in the meeting.

The next meeting will be held on 15 August.

More than 200 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Imphal Valley-based Meiteis and adjoining hills-based Kuki-Zo groups since May last year.

Ethnically-diverse Jiribam, which was largely untouched by ethnic violence in Imphal Valley and adjoining hills, erupted in violence after a mutilated body of a farmer was found in the fields in June this year. Thousands had to leave their homes and relocate to relief camps due to incidents of arson by both sides. A CRPF jawan was also killed in an ambush by militants during patrolling by security forces in mid-July. —*PTI*

The top court was hearing a plea filed by activist Sharif D Rangnekar challenging the 2017 guidelines **PHOTO: PTI**

EDUCATE TO BEAT SUPERSTITION

SC refuses to hear on sorcery eradication

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

The Supreme Court on Friday refused to entertain a plea seeking directions to the Centre and states to take appropriate steps to eradicate the menace of superstition, sorcery and other similar practices.

A three-judge bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra said the answer for eradication of superstition is education.

The top court said it is for the Parliament to intervene in such matters.

"How can we issue a writ that steps be taken to develop scientific temper and eradicate superstition. The founding fathers of the Constitution included all this in directive principles of state policy," the bench said.

The petitioner advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay withdrew the plea after the bench expressed disinclination to entertain the matter.

The plea said a strict anti-superstition and sorcery law is urgently needed to do away with the unscientific acts prevalent in the society that adversely impact the community and also to prevent fake seers from exploiting innocent people. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

- The Supreme Court on Friday refused to entertain a plea seeking directions to the Centre and states to take appropriate steps to eradicate the menace of superstition, sorcery and other similar practices.

SC seeks Centre's reply on transgenders giving blood

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

The Supreme Court on Friday sought response from the Centre on a plea challenging the guidelines that exclude transgenders, gay and sex workers from donating blood.

A bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud issued notices to the Union government, National Aids Control Organisation and National Blood Transfusion Council.

The top court was hearing a plea filed by activist Sharif D Rangnekar challenging the 2017 guidelines.

- The top court was hearing a plea filed by activist Sharif D Rangnekar challenging the 2017 guidelines.

The 2017 guideline excludes transgender persons, men having sex with men (MSM) , and female sex workers from being blood donors.

The 2017 guidelines permanently defer these population groups from being blood donors on account of being at risk of HIV and hepatitis infections or Transfusion Transmissible Infections (TTI). —*PTI*

KANWARIYAS WELCOMED

Flower petals being showered from a helicopter on Kanwariyas, at Augharnath Temple and Pura Mahadev Temple in Baghpat of Meerut in Uttar Pradesh
PHOTO: PTI

Landslides: Experts call for early warning system

An accurate early warning system that correlates rainfall and the potential for landslides. That is the imperative, say experts as rains create havoc in hills across India and the toll mounts in Kerala's Wayanad slopes where landslides buried entire homesteads and possibly hundreds of people.

On Thursday, cloudbursts in Himachal Pradesh led to houses, bridges and roads being washed away with five people dying and 50 missing. In Uttarakhand, heavy rain triggered floods and house collapses with at least 12 people killed. The rain scripted tragedies in the hill states came just two days after extremely heavy rain – more than 570 mm over 48 hours – triggered the disaster in Wayanad, leaving at least 177 people dead.

Given the scenario of erratic rain, extreme weather events, changing climatic conditions and the fragile hills – both in the north and in the south – an accurate early warning system (EWS) based on empirical rainfall thresholds followed by a systematic evacuation protocol is essential.

As of now, there are no granular studies or EWS for landslide forecasts in the country.

In Kerala, for instance, the Geological Survey of India (GSI) did give a forecast on July 29 for two days but not a sense of what was in store – the landslides hit early morning on July 30.

The Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA) gets forecasts for landslides in four categories -- very high possibility, high possibility, moderate and low possibility. Kerala had approved three pilot projects for state-specific landslide early warning systems in 2020. But none is complete yet.

According to the GSI website, about 0.42 million square km (covering nearly 12.6 per cent of India's land area) is prone to landslides. This includes all the Himalayan states, sub-Himalayan terrain of the north-east and the Eastern and Western Ghats states.

The KSDMA, for instance, does have a wide network of locally trained DM personnel and adequate mechanisms to disseminate the early warning messages. But that is only part of the picture.

Army personnel carry out rescue operation at a landslide-hit area in Wayanad District on Friday
PHOTO: PTI

On 29 July, the KSDMA asked people from hilly areas to go to relief camps but people did not leave as "they had not expected the intensity of the disaster to be this massive", Manoj said.

In December 2017, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) launched a pilot project for a 'Low-Cost Landslide Monitoring Solutions'. But that was restricted only to Himalayan states and nothing much has been done after that, an official said. A community-run effort at EWS in Maharashtra is hoping to make a difference with Satark, a project that issues landslide alerts. Started by the Pune-based non-profit Centre for Citizen Science (CCS) in August 2015, it ensures awareness about and issues alerts for landslides in the Sahyadri ranges (as the Western Ghats are known in Maharashtra).

The group's work started a year after the Malin village landslide in Pune district that left 151 dead. The group members poured over data from over the past few decades, from government agencies, local information sources and newspaper reports. "That gave us an idea about the correlation between the rainfall quantum and what is the time that a possible landslide can happen in any given location," Mayuresh Prabhune, one of the founding members of CCS, told PTI.

The CCS has mapped all landslide incidents over the last 20-25 years in the Sahyadri ranges and monitors rains every day during monsoon. At places where there was no government data, either through manual rain gauges or automatic rain gauges (ARG), the CCS gave manual rain gauges to local citizens.

For example, the CCS data shows that in the case of Mahabaleshwar, landslides happen after 600 mm rains. So, in case of continuous rainfall there, the group keeps a tab on daily accumulated rainfall and takes steps accordingly.

The group issues notifications at three levels: Watch, Alert and Warning. "Third is a specific village level alert. After the second step, we start monitoring it 24X7 and use radar images for the third step," Prabhune said. A March 2022 study published in the journal Land, an international and cross-disciplinary, peer-reviewed, open access journal, said the Satark model showed 76.5 per cent success in landslide prediction one day in advance. Although local administration takes help from CCS at times, the Maharashtra government has not yet agreed to a formal tie up. The minimum threshold level that CCS talks of was exactly what was pointed by a 2020 study by four researchers from Indore, Italy and Australia for Wayanad after conducting a detailed study of the recurring landslides in Wayanad between 2018 and 2019.The study, published in the journal Water concluded that 24 mm of rainfall a day is enough to trigger landslides in Wayanad.

—PTI

SALAR ساہر

AI 'girlfriends' are tech's next pitch to lonely men

At first glance, "Jenny" looks like a young, attractive Asian-American woman with a penchant for posting flirty photos and captions on her X account.

The OpenAI GPT store is meanwhile filled with dozens of customised versions of the popular chatbot that have been modified to behave like a romantic partner.

There's "Dominant Girlfriend", the "engaging and heartfelt", "Olivia Girlfriend", and "Your Ex-Girlfriend Lisa", who is billed as "snarky and resentful" but also capable of reminiscing.

Internet forums like Reddit offer long lists of the best AI companions and girlfriends, rating various attributes like realism, chat quality and explicitness – unlike the standard version of ChatGPT, which has guardrails to steer topics away from anything deemed explicit.

Not all attempts to jump on the trend have gone well – Replika's attempts to move into a more adult space last year were not well received by its users, and the company ended up removing the features.

Like many of the AI companions out there, LushAI's Jenny is something of a Frankenstein's monster underneath her glossy exterior. Launched in January, the token had a blockchain market capitalisation of about $9m as of 1 August, with tokens trading at the equivalent of $0.0004865 on Ethereum exchanges like Uniswap V2, according to publicly available data on the blockchain explorer Etherscan.

On LushAI's Discord channel, however, any interest in investment opportunities is far outweighed by excitement about the uncensored conversations offered by Jenny and the upcoming release of other models, including 27-year-old blonde "Kookie", and 23-year-old redhead "Natasha".

On its website, the company draws heavily on the so-called "red pill" philosophy, named after a scene in The Matrix film in which the protagonist is asked to choose either a "red pill" that will let him see the world as it is or a "blue pill" that will keep him inside a computer-generated simulation. In the world-view of LushAI, AI companions like Jenny are a means of escaping a dating market that has become unfairly stacked against most men due to a range of factors including the rise of dating apps and the widening of people's social circles. LushAI's white paper argues that its business model can help correct imbalances in the sexual marketplace which, "red pill" advocates claim, result in 80 percent of women only wanting to date the most good-looking and successful top 20 percent of men. According to research conducted in 2021 by the Survey Center on American Life, 15 per cent of male respondents reported having no close friends, up from 3 per cent in 1990.

As marriage rates continue to fall globally, men and women appear to be diverging politically and socioeconomically as well. In the US and other developed countries, young women are now more highly educated than their male counterparts, despite earning less on average in the workplace.

And while women are becoming more liberal in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, China, India and South Korea, men in those countries are at the same time becoming more conservative, according to polling by Gallup Nectar AI, a rival to LushAI, offers its claimed 500,000 users the option to personally design their own AI companion, choosing everything from physical appearance to their personality, backstory and past traumas. A chat between Al Jazeera and the platform's only male character, polo-clad CEO "Ben Anderson", unfolded at a tennis match.

Much like LushAI's Jenny, Ben was less eager to talk about serious topics such as politics than he was to flirt, including being open to the suggestion he take off his shirt following a sweaty game. Nectar AI co-founder Keccak Wong said the goal is to provide a "form of entertainment, whether that helps them with empathy, or is a place for them to play out more romantic and emotional intimacy." Besides Ben, the characters are based on female tropes such as "step-mom", "nurse", and "housewife" or the anime cliche of the "waifu" romantic interest. Wong said he hopes to offer a more diverse spread of characters in the future, catering to the needs of customers beyond its current heterosexual male base.

Wong said he did not view his company as part of the "red pill" community.

Nectar AI also hopes to release its own crypto token and let users spin off their "girlfriends" into online influencers or manga characters on other platforms, allowing them to earn money by licensing them out.

For now, Wong said much of the company's revenue has come from its credit card and bitcoin-based subscription services, but it has also received venture capital investment. The company on Thursday announced $3.9m in funding from Mechanism Capital and Kartage.

—Courtesy, Al Jazeera

OpenAI GPT store is, meanwhile, filled with dozens of customised versions of the popular chatbot that have been modified to behave like a romantic partner
PHOTO: PIXABAY

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Why is India silent over violent protests in Bangladesh?

Student groups in Bangladesh have called for fresh street protests after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government failed to meet their demand for releasing detained leaders and apologizing for the recent violence. The government puts the death tally at 150 as of this week, while media speaks of over 200 deaths in the clashes that came to articulate displeasure with Hasina's 16-year rule. India has been keeping a close eye on the unrest in Bangladesh, which is both a neighboring country and one of New Delhi's closest allies. It is also a temporary home for thousands of Indian students. But New Delhi was careful not to rock the boat. "India considers the ongoing situation in the country to be an internal matter of Bangladesh. With the support and cooperation of the Bangladesh government, we were able to arrange for the safe return of our students," the foreign office spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in a weekly press briefing. Around 6,700 Indian students have returned from Bangladesh amid the violent clashes in the country.

Bangladesh key to security, trade, diplomacy

For India, returning to normal means having Hasina firmly in power, partly for security reasons. The two countries share a 4,100-kilometer-long (2,500-mile) porous border, which can be exploited by human traffickers and terrorist groups. Moreover, Bangladesh shares the border with the Indian states of West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram which are vulnerable to violent insurgencies. Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty, a former India's high commissioner to Bangladesh, told DW that India has invested in the neighboring country to build public support and goodwill.

"Bangladesh's geographical position makes it a stakeholder in the development of the sub-region comprising Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal. This region includes Indian states to the north and east of Bangladesh. These states in the northeast of India were once integrated into the supply chain in undivided India," Chakravarty told DW.

Now, Bangladesh and India are working to boost transport links and "restore what existed in the pre-partition era," he added.

Billions in credit to Dhaka

India recognizes Bangladesh as a vital eastern buffer and provides critical support through its ports and power grid access. New Delhi has so far extended almost $8 billion (₹7.39 billion) in lines of credit to Dhaka which is used for development projects, building infrastructure and construction of a pipeline to supply diesel.

Relations between India and Bangladesh are embedded in their shared history, complex socio-economic interdependency
PHOTO: ANI

Major Indian companies that have invested in the country include Marico, Emami, Dabur, Asian Paints, and Tata Motors. Any escalation of the student protests could directly or indirectly affect these companies.

"The relations between India and Bangladesh are embedded in their shared history, complex socio-economic interdependency, and their geo-political positioning. Any confrontational politics and political instability in the region invite the problems of terrorism, fundamentalism, insurgency, and migration," Sanjay Bhardwaj of Jawaharlal Nehru University's Centre for South Asian Studies told DW.

Locked between India and China

In recent years, both India and China have expanded their economic stakes in Bangladesh, which is being folded into the two countries' growing geopolitical rivalry.

Despite boasting close ties to Bangladesh, however, some analysts believe that Indian policymakers struggle to understand the anti-Indian sentiment prevalent among parts of the Bangladesh population.

Some of it can be explained by New Delhi's support to the ruling Awami League.

"The 'uneasy quiet' is India's silent support for Hasina's government and its policies to deal with the ongoing unrest. Over the past decades, India has invested heavily in the Awami League as a pro-India entity in Bangladesh," Shanthie Mariet D'Souza, the founder of independent research forum Mantraya, told DW.

Regime critics in Bangladesh accuse Hasina of trying to turn Bangladesh into a one-party state and are especially enraged by her crackdown on political opponents and civil society groups.

India looks at bigger picture

According to D'Souza, India sees Bangladesh as crucial for several strategic reasons — including the development of the northeast, curtailing migration into India, and dealing with Islamist radicalization. "Despite significant Chinese investments in that country, New Delhi still considers Hasina as someone who will prevent Bangladesh from transforming into a stooge of Beijing. As a result, supporting her becomes New Delhi's only strategic option, even while her policies have often bordered on autocracy," she said. Seen from that angle, the recent failings of the Hasina government and strengthening of the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party, as well local Islamist parties, is not good news for India. Even so, professor Sreeradha Datta from the India-based Jindal School of International Affairs believes that the extreme response of the Hasina government to the student protests cannot be justified. She criticized the Bangladeshi officials over their attempt to place all blame for the violence on opposition parties and Islamist students. The protests turned violent as a reaction to the government's "non-response and rather derogatory remarks," Datta said. *—Courtesy, DW India*

PHOTO: PTI

Pakistan: Rain inundates Lahore, kills four

LAHORE, 2 AUG

As heavy rains in Lahore on Thursday broke a 44-year-old record in three hours, four people lost their lives in the city, while at least seven people suffered injuries, Pakistan-based daily, Dawn reported. Two people were also killed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Six flights between Lahore and Karachi faced delays due to rain as the Civil Aviation Authority staff remained busy clearing the runway and surrounding areas. Residents of Mughalpura, Tajpura and Garhi Shahu struggled with unclogged sewers, which were blocked perhaps due to excessive garbage. Several two-wheelers and four-wheelers were stuck in several areas after they broke down amid heavy rains. Overall people died in Lahore, while seven were injured. *—ANI*

Senior leader of Imran's party shot dead in Lahore

LAHORE, 2 AUG

A senior leader of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party was shot dead in Lahore while he was coming out of a mosque after offering Friday prayers, police said. "Dr Shahid Saddique Khan was coming out of a mosque in Valancia Town in Lahore after offering Friday prayers when four unidentified men opened fire on him and fled on two motorcycles. He was shifted to a hospital where he succumbed to his wounds," a Lahore police spokesperson said. The spokesperson said that the Lahore police chief has constituted a special team to probe it. Khan was the owner of a private hospital and former information secretary of PTI's Punjab chapter. IGP Punjab Dr Usman Anwar has directed the Lahore police to arrest the perpetrators. *—AP*

2 Indian nationals arrested for drug distribution

WASHINGTON DC, 2 AUG

US officials have arrested two Indian nationals with drugs worth USD 10 million, the Department of Justice said. Simranjit Singh, 28, and Gusimrat Singh, 19, of Fresno, California were each charged with one count of conspiracy to distribute and to possess with intent to distribute controlled substances, it said. Both made initial appearances before a federal court in Boston on 29 July and remain in custody. They were detained after local police found in the cab of the tractor trailer, over 400-kg bricks of suspected cocaine worth more than USD 10.5 million. On 29 July, a white tractor trailer arrived at a planned Andover address to deliver methamphetamine to the undercover agents. *—AP*

S'pore's Indian origin man jailed for string of crimes

SINGAPORE, 2 AUG

A former Indian-origin Singaporean lawyer, M Ravi was sentenced on Friday to 14 weeks' jail and fined USD 4,120 for his latest string of crimes that involved pushing or injuring strangers and acquaintances - including a Hindu temple priest in the city-state. Ravi committed the offences between November 2021 to September 2023. He made a scene at Sri Mariamman Temple on July 9, 2023, pushing his way to the front of queueing devotees, tipping over a plate of offerings and smearing holy ash on himself. He pushed a priest who was trying to intervene and asked loudly why there were so many foreigners and a need to queue. The century-old temple is one of the favourite spots among tourists. While he has been known for his brushes with law, this is the first time he is being sentenced to jail. *—AP*

Death of Hamas leader 'doesn't help' truce: Biden

Biden promises to protect Israel against threats from Iran

WASHINTON DC, 2 AUG

US President Joe Biden has said that the assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh "doesn't help" talks over a potential ceasefire in Gaza.

Haniyeh was killed during a visit to Iran's capital, Tehran, on Wednesday. Iran and its allies have blamed Israel, although Israel is yet to comment on his death.

Haniyeh was Hamas's most senior official and was highly involved in ceasefire and hostage release talks from his base in Qatar.

Biden said he was "very concerned" about rising tensions in the Middle East. "We have the basis for a ceasefire. He (Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu) should move on it and they (Hamas) should move on it now."

Israel and Hamas recently resumed tentative, indirect talks to try to reach a ceasefire in the war in Gaza, though there have been conflicting accounts of progress.

Earlier this week, Israel and Hamas accused each other of obstructing progress. Hamas said Israel had introduced new conditions, while Mr Netanyahu's office said Hamas had demanded 29 changes to the proposal.

The war began in October when Hamas carried out an unprecedented attack on Israel, killing about 1,200 people and taking 251 others back to Gaza as hostages. The attack triggered a massive Israeli military response, which has killed at least 39,480 Palestinians in Gaza, according to the territory's Hamas-run health ministry.

He said he had spoken to Netanyahu earlier on Thursday and had promised to protect Israel "against all threats from Iran", which has vowed to retaliate. Iran is Hamas's most important backer and is an arch-foe of Israel.

Israel has not claimed responsibility for the assassination, but Netanyahu said after the killing that Israel had delivered "crushing blows" to Iran's proxy groups in recent days.

On Saturday, 12 children and young people were killed after a strike on a football field in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. Israel blamed Lebanon's Iranian-backed Hezbollah movement.

—BBC News

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu with US President Joe Biden in New York PHOTO: PTI

Turkey blocks Instagram amid 'censorship' row

ANKARA, 2 AUG

Turkey has blocked access to Instagram, the national communications authority said, after a top government official slammed the social media platform for "censoring" Hamas-related content. The communications authority BTK announced the block on Friday. The move follows comments on Wednesday by the Turkish presidency's communications director, Fahrettin Altun, criticising the Meta-owned platform for blocking condolence posts on Ismail Haniyeh. There are more than 50 million users signed up to Instagram in Turkey *—Al-Jazeera*

Trump raises $139M in July, has $327M on hand

WASHINGTON, 2 AUG

Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump has said that his campaign raised USD 139 million in July and has USD 327 million cash on hand.

"There has never been anything like the MAGA Movement. We raised USD 139 Million Dollars in July alone. We now have a whopping USD 327 Million Cash On Hand." Trump said on Truth Social, his social media platform.

"Spectacular support from Great American Patriots who are donating to our Campaign for President of the United States, and helping out in many other ways. Much work to be done, but I will always keep fighting for YOU. Our Country is failing, but we will turn it around, quickly, and MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!," he said. The Trump Campaign, said these numbers reflect continued momentum with donors at every level and provide the resources for the final 96 days until victory on 5 November. *—AP*

Donald Trump PHOTO: PTI

JUDGES SAFE

The current attack adds to the ongoing series of such terror attacks but more in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province PHOTO: KHYBERNEWS.TV

2 Pak cops killed in terror attack on judges' convoy

PESHAWAR, 2 AUG

- Pakistan experienced 1,514 terror attacks in 2023, resulting in 2,922 casualties, according to a report from the Interior Ministry presented to the National Assembly

Two police personnel on security duty of judges were killed and two others injured on Friday when their convoy was ambushed by terrorists in the restive in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in northwest Pakistan, police said.

All the three judges remained safe in the shootout.

The judges' convoy that was proceeding from Tank district courts to their homes in Dera Ismail Khan after duty hours was under tight security arrangements when armed militants attacked it.

"Two policemen were killed in the line of duty while protecting the judges in the convoy from lethal armed attack by the militants. Two others were injured," a police official said.

The ambush is continuing between the police and militants on Tank- DI Khan road, police said.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister of the province Ali Amin Gandapur condemned the attack on judges' vehicles and sought a report. Expressing his condolences over the death of two policemen, Gandapur also called for making tighter the security cordon for the judges.

The current attack adds to the ongoing series of such terror attacks across the country, but more so in the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Pakistan experienced 1,514 terror attacks in 2023, resulting in 2,922 casualties, according to a report from the Interior Ministry presented to the National Assembly.

The report reveals that 572 armed forces personnel were killed and 1,292 were injured in these attacks.

The report also covers the period from January to April 2024, during which 561 terror attacks occurred and led to the deaths of 167 security personnel and 118 civilians, the news report said. *—PTI*

Intel failure lead to attack on Gaza aid convoy: Aus

MELBOURNE, 2 AUG

The Israeli military's attack on an aid convoy in Gaza in April that killed seven people was the result of serious failures of defence procedures, mistaken identification and errors in decision-making, according to an Australian investigation that was made public Friday.

Australia initiated the investigation to examine Tel Aviv's response to the widely condemned Israeli Defence Forces' drone strikes on three World Central Kitchen vehicles on 1 April. Australian Zomi Frankcom, three of her aid worker colleagues and three British personal security staff died in the attack.

Former Australian Defence Force Chief Mark Binskin was appointed the government's special adviser on the matter and visited Israel in May. He also engaged with World Central Kitchen and Solace Global, the company that provided the convoy's security team.

Binskin blamed the fatal strikes on "serious failures to follow IDF procedures and errors in decision-making," a statement said. The armed security guards were likely mistaken for Hamas operatives, Binskin said. This was the primary factor behind a "significant break down in situational awareness." He found the strikes were not deliberately directed against World Central Kitchen.

While Binskin's report outlined steps Israeli had taken to avoid a repeat tragedy, "stronger protocols" were needed to protect aid workers in Gaza, Wong said.

"Gaza remains the deadliest place on earth to be an aid worker. This was not a one-off incident," Wong told reporters. *—AP*

The Israeli military's attack on an aid convoy in Gaza on 1 April had killed seven people PHOTO: PTI

PAK PAID OVER $3.6B IN INTEREST TO IMF, SAYS FINANCE MINISTRY

ISLAMABAD, 2 AUG

Pakistan has paid more than USD 3.6 billion in interest on loans to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the last 40 years, the finance ministry of the cash-strapped government has informed Parliament.

This was revealed by the government during a meeting of the Senate's Standing Committee on Economic Affairs on Thursday at the Parliament House, where the Ministry of Finance presented details of the loans and repayments made to the Washington-based global lender so far.

According to The Express Tribune newspaper, during the briefing by officials from the Ministry of Finance and the State Bank of Pakistan, it was disclosed that Pakistan has paid over USD 3.60 billion in interest to the IMF.

The documents presented in the meeting revealed that the interest paid amounts to over Rs 1,000 billion in Pakistani currency.

It also emerged that over the past 30 years, the cash-strapped country has borrowed approximately USD 29 billion from the IMF and has repaid more than USD 21.72 billion in the same period. *—PTI*

More than 300 protesters were arrested and curfews imposed in the northern states of Kano and Katsina in Nigeria PHOTO: AP

Protests over Nigeria's economic crisis kill 14

ABUJA, 2 AUG

At least 13 protesters were killed during mass protests in Nigeria against the country's economic crisis that turned violent in several states, a rights group said Friday.

Authorities confirmed four people killed by a bomb and the arrests of hundreds in the protests that triggered curfews in several states.

Amnesty International's Nigeria director Isa Sanusi said in an interview that it independently verified the deaths that were reported by witnesses, families of the victims and lawyers.

More than 300 protesters were arrested and curfews imposed in the northern states of Kano and Katsina after the looting of government and public properties, Nigerian police said. One police officer was also killed and several others injured. The protests were mainly over food shortages and alleged bad governance in the country. Nigeria's public officials, frequently accused of corruption, are among the best paid in Africa, a stark contrast in a country that has some of the world's poorest and hungriest people, despite being one of the continent's top oil producers.

Carrying placards, bells and Nigeria's green-and-white flag, protesters chanted songs as they listed their demands, including the reinstatement of gas and electricity subsidies whose removal as part of the government's audacious reforms to grow the economy has had a knock-on effect on the price of just about everything else. *—AP*

LANDMARK EXCHANGE

Freed Americans back home after prisoner swap with Russia

WASHINGTON DC, 2 AUG

The United States and Russia completed their biggest prisoner swap in post-Soviet history on Thursday, with Moscow releasing journalist Evan Gershkovich and fellow American Paul Whelan, along with dissidents including Vladimir Kara-Murza, in a multinational deal that set two dozen people free.

Gershkovich, Whelan and Alsu Kurmasheva, a journalist with dual US-Russia citizenship, arrived on American soil shortly before midnight for a joyful reunion with their families. President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris also were at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland to greet them and dispense hugs all around.

The trade unfolded despite relations between Washington and Moscow being at their lowest point since the Cold War after Russian President Vladimir Putin's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

The dissidents released included Kara-Murza, a Kremlin critic and Pulitzer Prize-winning writer serving 25 years on charges of treason widely seen as politically motivated, as well as multiple associates of Navalny. Freed Kremlin critics included Oleg Orlov, a veteran human rights campaigner convicted of discrediting the Russian military, and Ilya Yashin, imprisoned for criticizing the war in Ukraine.

The Russian side got Vadim Krasikov, who was convicted in Germany in 2021 and sentenced to life in prison for killing a former Chechen rebel in a Berlin park two years earlier, apparently on the orders of Moscow's security services.

Russia also received two alleged sleeper agents jailed in Slovenia, as well as three men charged by federal authorities in the US, including Roman Seleznev, a convicted computer hacker and the son of a Russian lawmaker, and Vadim Konoshchenok, a suspected Russian intelligence operative accused of providing American-made electronics and ammunition to the Russian military. Norway returned an academic arrested on suspicions of being a Russian spy; Poland sent back a man it detained on espionage charges. *—AP*

US Presdient Joe Biden (R) and Vice President Kamala Harris (L) react as Russian-American journalist Alsu Kurmasheva (C) hugs her family members after arriving in the US PHOTO: PTI

KP Sharma Oli PHOTO: X@CRUXX_Ind

NEPAL'S NEW PM OLI LIKELY TO VISIT THAILAND

KATHMANDU, 2 AUG

Nepal's newly-elected Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli is most likely to choose Thailand as the destination of his first foreign trip, breaking the tradition of visiting a neighbouring country first.

In the past, Nepalese Prime Ministers mostly paid visits to India first, with some exceptions of choosing China as their first destination.

Prime Minister Oli is scheduled to pay a visit to Thailand in the first week of September to attend the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Summit, according to official sources. An aide to Oli said that the he will visit Thailand tentatively in the first week of September. The leaders of member countries of BIMSTEC including Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand are meeting in Bangkok in the first week of September to attend the summit of the regional body. *—AP*

Gold rises ₹350; per 10g; Silver slips ₹200

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

Rising for the fourth straight day, gold prices gained Rs 350 to Rs 72,850 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday, following higher local demand amid firm global trends. The precious metal had settled at Rs 72,500 per 10 grams in the previous session. On the other hand, silver prices declined by Rs 200 to Rs 86,000 per kilogram on Friday. It had closed at Rs 86,200 per kg in the previous trade, according to the All India Sarafa Association. Additionally, gold of 99.5 per cent purity increased by Rs 350 to 72,500 per 10 grams from Thursday's closing at Rs 72,150 per 10 grams. *—PTI*

Rupee settles 2P lower at 83.75 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 2 AUG

The rupee settled 2 paise lower at 83.75 (provisional) against the US dollar in a range-bound trade on Friday as massive sell-offs in domestic as well as global equity markets negated gains from a weak American currency. The Indian currency resisted the fall due to a sharp decline in the dollar after the latest US data showed slower manufacturing growth in the world's largest economy, forex traders said. At the interbank currency exchange, the domestic currency opened at 83.74 and traded in the narrow range of 83.72 and 83.76 against the greenback during the session. The unit finally settled at 83.75 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a loss of 2 paise from the previous closing level. On Thursday, the rupee declined 5 paise to settle at 83.73 against the US dollar. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a

MFI sector lowers rates, shows maturity: MFIN

KOLKATA, 2 AUG

Microfinance Industry Network (MFIN), the self-regulatory organisation of the micro-credit sector, on Friday said that the entities operating in this space have demonstrated maturity with several of them lowering interest rates in the last few months. The reduction in interest rates has been up to 150 basis points, it said, MFIN said the microfinance units had been able to pass on efficiency gains to their customers, which had been made possible by the adoption of better technology and diversifying sources of funding. The self-regulatory organisation said assessment of a borrower's household income is important as this will ensure that a borrower does not overstretch herself and is able to honour her repayments on time. MFIN members also identified several guardrails like restricting the number of microfinance lenders to a borrower to four and limiting the total to Rs 2 lakh. *—PTI*

Amazon reports boost in profits but misses revenue

SEATTLE, 2 AUG

Amazon reported a boost in its quarterly profits Thursday, but the company missed revenue estimates, sending stocks lower in after-hours trading. The Seattle-based tech company said it earned USD 13.5 billion for the April-June period, higher than the USD 10.99 billion industry analysts surveyed by FactSet had anticipated. Amazon earned USD 6.7 billion during the same period last year. Earnings per share for the second quarter came out to USD 1.26, higher than analysts expectations of USD 1.03. Overall, the company posted revenue of USD 148 billion, a 10 per cent increase that fell slightly below analyst expectations of USD 148.67 billion. Sales for Amazon Web Services, the company's prominent cloud computing unit, saw a 19 per cent jump compared to the same period last year. Amazon's results follow other earning reports this week from tech giants such as Microsoft, Meta and Google's corporate parent, Alphabet Inc. *—PTI*

Market snaps 5-day rally as Sensex tumbles 855 pts

HDFC, Kotak Bank & Nestle India were among the gainers

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

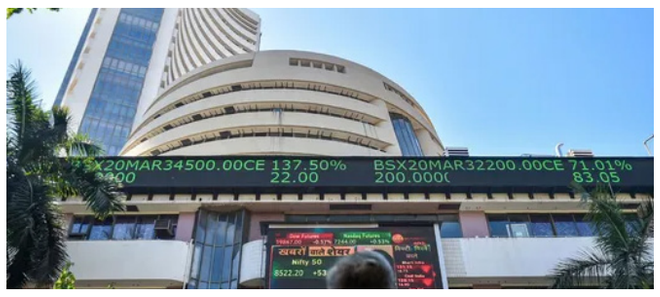
Equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty halted their five-day rally to close with deep cuts on Friday in line with a global sell-off as investors dialled back risk exposure in metal, auto and IT stocks after weak US job data.

Amid widespread selling pressure, the 30-share BSE Sensex plunged 885.60 points or 1.08 per cent to close at 80,981.95. During the day, it nosedived 998.64 points or 1.21 per cent to hit an intra-day low of 80,868.91.

The broader Nifty of NSE slipped 293.20 points or 1.17 per cent to end at 24,717.70. It fell 324.05 points or 1.29 per cent to 24,686.85 during the session.

From the Sensex stocks, Maruti Suzuki India, Tata Motors, JSW Steel, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Steel, Mahindra and Mahindra, Tata Consultancy Services, Tech Mahindra, HCL Technologies and Infosys were the laggards.

HDFC Bank, Sun Pharmaceuticals, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Nestle India and Asian Paints were among the gainers.



NSE slipped 293.20 points to end at 24,717.70 **PHOTO: PTI**

Foreign institutional investors bought equities worth Rs 2,089.28 crore in the capital markets. The 30-share Sensex climbed 126.21 points to close at a new lifetime high of 81,867.55. *—PTI*

Zomato shares surge over 12%; hit 52-week high

Shares of Zomato surged more than 12 per cent on Friday after the food delivery aggregator reported a multi-fold jump in consolidated net profit to Rs 253 crore for the June quarter. The stock of Zomato zoomed 12.14 per cent to trade at Rs 262.50 apiece on the NSE. On the BSE, it jumped 12.13 per cent to Rs 262.50 per piece. In the intra-day trade, shares of Zomato advanced up to 19 per cent to hit a 52-week high of Rs 278.70 and 278.45 apiece on the NSE and BSE. *—PTI*

TATA MOTORS SHARES SLUMP 4% ON POOR SALES DATA

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

Shares of Tata Motors slumped 4 per cent on Friday after the Mumbai-based auto major reported an 11 per cent year-on-year dip in total sales in July.

The stock of the company declined 4.09 per cent to trade at Rs 1,097.65 apiece on the National Stock Exchange (NSE). On the BSE, scrip of Tata Motors dropped 3.69 per cent to trade at Rs 1,102.40 per piece.

Meanwhile, Adani Wilmar shares jumped 5 per cent on Friday in the morning trade after the group's flagship firm Adani Enterprises announced that it will demerge its food-FMCG division and also its strategic investments in Adani Commodities LLP to edible oil major.

The company's scrip climbed 4.82 per cent to trade at Rs 365.15 apiece on the National Stock Exchange (NSE). *—PTI*

RS 158 CRORE DISPUTE

NCLAT approves Byju's settlement with BCCI

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

In a major relief to Byju's, the NCLAT on Friday set aside insolvency proceedings against the troubled edtech major over a sponsorship deal and approved a Rs 158 crore settlement with the Board of Control for Cricket in India.

National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT), however, passed the order with a caveat that any failure to make payments on the specific dates mentioned in the undertaking would automatically lead to a revival of the insolvency proceedings against Byju's.

The appellate tribunal also dismissed the allegation of round-tripping levelled by Byju's US-based lenders, saying they failed to provide any evidence for the same.

The tribunal further said the money was paid by Riju Raveendran (brother of Byju Raveendran) through sales of his shares.

NCLAT was hearing a petition filed by Byju's, challenging the initiation of insolvency proceedings against parent company Think & Learn.

NCLT has suspended the board of Think & Learn as per the provisions of the IBC and appointed an interim resolution professional (IRP) to take care of the debt-ridden firm.

PHOTO: @BYJUS.COM

On 16 July, the Bengaluru bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) directed the initiation of Corporate Insolvency Resolution Proceedings (CIRP) against Byju's, admitting the plea filed by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

The BCCI had approached the NCLT under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) over a default of Rs 158.9 crore by Think & Learn -- once India's most valuable startup worth USD 22 billion. *—PTI*

Reliance lenders warn of action against Hindujas

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

Lenders of debt-ridden Reliance Capital (RCAP) have cautioned Hinduja Group arm IndusInd International Holdings of remedial action as it has failed to comply with the NCLT-imposed conditions, including a deposit of Rs 250 crore in an escrow account.

IndusInd International Holdings (IIHL), the successful bidder for Reliance Capital, has been given an extension till 10 August subject to certain conditions by NCLT, Mumbai.

As per the NCLT order dated 23 July, the successful bidder had to comply with certain conditions by 31 July.

These conditions included depositing the initial equity amount of Rs 250 crore in a domestic escrow account and Rs 2,500 crore in an offshore escrow account of the Committee of Creditors (CoC) by 31 July.

IIHL failed to meet the deadline of 31 July. On 1 August, Vistra ITCL, the trusteeship acting on behalf of the CoC, wrote a letter to IIHL that it had defaulted on the NCLT order, now lenders reserve their rights and remedies as per the resolution plan submitted by it.

Reliance Capital had a debt of over Rs 40,000 crore, and four applicants had initially bid with resolution plans. However, the committee of creditors rejected all four plans for lower bid values and a challenge mechanism was initiated in which IIHL and Torrent Investments participated.

—PTI

Reliance Capital had a debt of over Rs 40,000 crore **PHOTO: PTI**

'BEWARE'

The statement came after the exchange noticed that an authorised person of its registered stock broker was offering guaranteed returns and was collecting commission **PHOTO: PTI**

NSE cautions investors against entity guaranteed returns

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

The National Stock Exchange (NSE) on Friday cautioned investors against an entity offering guaranteed returns on investment in the stock market.

The statement came after the exchange noticed that an authorised person of its registered stock broker was offering guaranteed returns and was collecting commission on such assured returns from investors.

"It has been brought to the notice of the exchange that Amit Lilhare, authorised person of one of our registered Stock Broker, operating through various addresses (mentioned below) is providing assured/guaranteed returns on investment in the stock market and is also collecting a commission on such assured/guaranteed returns from investors in his personal bank accounts," NSE said in a statement.

The exchange said it is in the process of taking disciplinary actions against the trading member.

Earlier in February, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) had cautioned investors against placing money with unregistered entities promising assured or exceptionally high returns on investments. *—PTI*

Omaxe slide show continues; hits lower circuit for third day

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

Shares of Omaxe fell 5 per cent on Friday following SEBI restrictions on the realty firm, its Chairman, MD, and three others from the securities market for two years for misrepresenting the company's financials.

Extending its losses for the third consecutive session, Omaxe's shares declined 5 per cent each of Rs 139.15 and 137.40 apiece -- its lower circuit limit -- on the NSE and BSE, respectively. In the past three sessions, the company's shares declined 15 per cent on both bourses.

30-share benchmark BSE Sensex tumbled 700.52 points or 0.86 per cent to trade at 81,167.03 while NSE Nifty declined 239.75 points. Realty firm Omaxe said it will consider challenging market regulator SEBI's order on Tuesday that barred the company, its Chairman Rohtas Goel, MD Mohit Goel, and three others from the securities market for two years for misrepresentation in the company's financial statements. *—PTI*

Govt nod to hydro project in K'taka, Odisha

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

The power ministry on Friday said the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) has approved the detailed project report of two hydro pumped storage plants -- 600 MW Upper Indravati in Odisha and 2,000 MW Sharavathy in Karnataka -- in record time.

To fast-track the concurrence process of hydro PSPs (pumped storage projects) in line with ease of doing business drive of the Government of India, the CEA has further revised the guidelines to simplify the process for preparation of DPRs (detailed project reports) of PSPs and its concurrence, a ministry statement said.

According to the statement, the 600 MW Upper Indravati in Odisha is being developed by OHPC Ltd (a Odisha government undertaking) and 2,000 MW Sharavathy in Karnataka is being developed by KPCL (a unit of Karnataka government).

Projects were approved in record time as per govt data **PHOTO: PTI**

CEA has received a number of proposals of hydro PSPs (around 60 GW), under survey and investigation for preparation of DPRs. All the developers are at various stages of preparation of DPR. After preparation of DPRs, these PSPs will be uploaded by the developers on CEA website for concurrence under section 8 of the Electricity Act, 2003.

As per the National Electricity Plan (Generation), the installed capacity of energy storage systems including BESS is projected at 74 GW by 2031-32.

Under the revised guidelines for approval of DPRs of PSPs, the developers are allowed to submit the DPR online with completion of first 13 chapters. Some of the chapters have been dispensed with. *—PTI*

New record of over 7.28 crore income tax returns filed: Tax department

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

Income tax returns (ITRs) touched a new record of over 7.28 crore, 7.5 per cent higher compared to previous fiscal, by the July 31 deadline, the income tax department said on Friday.

The total number of ITRs for assessment year 2024-25 filed till July 31, 2024 is more than 7.28 crore, which is 7.5 per cent higher than the total ITRs for AY 2023-24 (6.77 crore) filed till July 31, 2023, the department said in a statement.

"Out of the total ITRs of 7.28 crore filed for AY 2024-25, 5.27 crore have been filed in the new tax regime compared to 2.01 crore ITRs filed in the old tax regime," it said.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Thus, about 72 per cent of taxpayers have opted for the new tax regime, while 28 per cent continue to be in the old tax regime.

The filing of ITRs peaked on July 31, 2024 (the due date for salaried taxpayers and other non-tax audit cases), with over 69.92 lakh ITRs having been filed on a single day.

The department also received 58.57 lakh ITRs from first-time filers, a fair indication of the widening of the tax base.

In a historic first, ITRs (ITR-1, ITR-2, ITR-4, ITR-6) were deployed on the e-filing portal on the first day of the Financial Year i.e. on 1 April, 2024.

Out of the 7.28 crore ITRs filed for A.Y. 2024-25, 45.77 per cent of ITRs are ITR-1 (3.34 crore), 14.93 per cent are ITR-2 (1.09 crore), 12.5 per cent are ITR-3 (91.10 lakh), 25.77 per cent are ITR-4 (1.88 crore) and 1.03 per cent are ITR-5 to ITR-7 (7.48 lakh). *—PTI*

WHY IT MATTERS?

Meta launches the largest 'open' AI model in history

SYDNEY, 2 AUG

In the world of artificial intelligence (AI), a battle is underway. On one side are companies that believe in keeping the datasets and algorithms behind their advanced software private and confidential. On the other are companies that believe in allowing the public to see what's under the hood of their sophisticated AI models.

Think of this as the battle between open- and closed-source AI.

In recent weeks, Meta, the parent company of Facebook, took up the fight for open-source AI in a big way by releasing a new collection of large AI models. These include a model named Llama 3.1 405B, which Meta's founder and chief executive, Mark Zuckerberg, says is "the first frontier-level open source AI model".

For anyone who cares about a future in which everybody can access the benefits of AI, this is good news.

The danger of closed-source AI – and the promise of open-source AI

Closed-source AI refers to models, datasets and algorithms that are proprietary and kept confidential. Examples include ChatGPT, Google's Gemini and Anthropic's Claude.

Meta has emerged as a pioneer of open-source AI **PHOTO: PTI**

Though anyone can use these products, there is no way to find out what dataset and source codes have been used to build the AI model or tool.

There are a range of ethical frameworks that seek to improve the fairness, accountability, transparency, privacy and human oversight of AI. However, these principles are often not fully achieved with closed-source AI due to the inherent lack of transparency and external accountability associated with proprietary systems.

Among all leading AI companies, Meta has emerged as a pioneer of open-source AI. With its new suite of AI models, it is doing what OpenAI promised to do when it launched in December 2015 – namely, advancing digital intelligence "in the way that is most likely to benefit humanity as a whole", as OpenAI said back then.

To ensure AI is democratised, we need three key pilars:

-**governance**: regulatory and ethical frameworks to ensure AI technology is being developed and used responsibly and ethically

-**accessibility**: affordable computing resources and user-friendly tools to ensure a fair landscape for developers and users

-**openness**: datasets and algorithms to train and build AI tools should be open source to ensure transparency.

But several questions remain about open-source AI. How can we balance protecting intellectual property and fostering innovation through open-source AI? How can we minimise ethical concerns around open-source AI? How can we safeguard open-source AI against potential misuse? *—PTI*

COUNTRIES				
1. China	13	7	7	27
2. US	9	17	15	41
3. France	9	11	11	31
4. UK	9	8	8	25
45. India	0	0	3	3

52-YEAR WAIT ENDS: INDIA BEAT AUSTRALIA

Saves the historic win for their last pool match

India's players celebrate a goal during the Hockey Men's Pool B match between India and Australia at the 2024 Summer Olympics, at Yves-du-Manoir Stadium, in Colombes, on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

PARIS, 2 AUG

Skipper Harmanpreet Singh scored a brace as the India men's hockey team registered a famous 3-2 win over Tokyo Games silver medallist and nemesis Australia in its final Pool B match on Friday.

Already assured of a quarterfinal berth before Friday's encounter, the Indians played valiantly and dominated the proceedings for major part of the match to stun the Kookaburras, against whom they last won in Olympics in the 1972 Munich edition.

It seemed India had saved their best for their last pool match, as it delivered a power-packed performance, playing attacking hockey from the beginning, and defending well throughout.

Abhishek (12th), skipper Harmanpreet (13th, 33rd) scored for India while Tom Craig (25th) and Blake Govers, 55, found the net for Australia.

With this win, India most likely will finish their pool engagements in the second position with nine points, finishing behind table toppers Belgium (12), who are yet to play a match. The pole position will not change even if Belgium loses its match against Argentina.

The goal difference after that match will determine the final placing.

Indians started on an aggressive note and made two circle entries in the first two minutes. Indians too secured back-to-back penalty corners in the final quarter, only to waste them.

Five minutes from the final hooter, Govers scored his seventh goal from a penalty stroke to reduce the margin.

Thereafter, the Indian defence stood tall to deny the Australians to register a famous win.

—PTI

SEN BECOMES 1ST INDIAN TO ENTER MEN'S SEMIS

PARIS, 2 AUG

Lakshya Sen inched closer to a maiden Olympic medal after becoming the first Indian male shuttler to advance to the semifinals with a thrilling three-game win over Chinese Taipei's Chou Tien Chen at the Paris Games on Friday.

The 22-year-old from Almora, a 2021 World Championships bronze medallist, combined pace with precision and held his nerve during key moments to emerge 19-21 21-15 21-12 winner against world number 11 Chou, a 2022 World Championships bronze medallist in an intense quarterfinal battle.

Sen, the reigning Commonwealth Games champion, will face the winner of the match between 2021 World Champion Loh kean Yew of Singapore and Olympic champion Viktor Axelsen of Denmark in the last four.

Women's singles players PV Sindhu and Saina Nehwal are the only Indians to have crossed the quarterfinal stage in Olympics. In men's singles, Parupalli Kashyap and Kidambi Srikanth had reached the quarterfinals in 2012 London and 2016 Rio editions respectively. *—PTI*

India's Lakshya Sen plays a shot during a men's badminton singles quarterfinal match against China's Chou Tien Chen at the 2024 Summer Olympics, in Paris on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

Indian Mixed Archery team miss out on Bronze, loss 2-6 to USA in playoff

PARIS, 2 AUG

The history-making Indian mixed team of Ankita Bhakat and Dhiraj Bommadevara came agonisingly close to ending India's 36-year wait for an Olympic medal in Archery but fell short to finish fourth at the Games here on Friday.

The team had already created history by entering the semifinals of the Summer Games for the first time. But the duo lost 37-38 35-37 38-34 35-37 to the American combine of world no.1 Casey Kaufhold and three-time Olympic-medallist Brady Ellison to join the fourth-finishers' club at the Olympics.

It was nonetheless the best ever performance by an Indian team in the quadrennial showpiece. Trailing 0-4, the Indians did well to make a comeback as Ankita struck a superb 10. All four Indian arrows were in the yellow zone while Casey looked a bit nervous firing a 7 with her first arrow before a 9 and 10. India's advantage was neutralised in the third set following a below par 36.

In their opening round the Indians had trounced Indonesia 5-1 (37-36 38-38 38-37). *—PTI*

India's Ankita Bhakat competes along with India's Dhiraj Bommadevara during the Archery mixed team quarterfinal **PHOTO: PTI**

WILL MANU BRING HOME 3RD MEDAL IN 25M SHOOTING?

CHATEAUROUX, 2 AUG

Indian shooter Manu Bhaker kept herself on track for a hat-trick of Olympic medals, coming up with one of her most memorable performances in her favourite event, the 25m sports pistol, as she booked a place in the final in second spot on Friday.

The 22-year-old, who has already made history by becoming the first Indian athlete to win two bronze medals in one edition of the quadrennial showpiece, can add to her aura if she wins a third medal on Saturday.

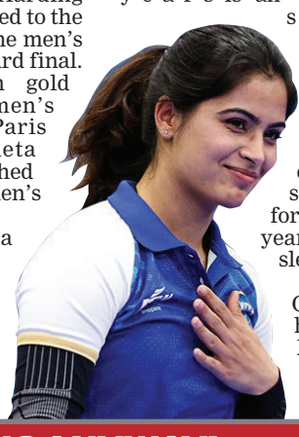
Just after winning her second bronze medal, in 10m air pistol mixed team event, Manu had urged the countrymen not to be "disappointed" if she can't add more medals to the tally.

National pistol coach Jung faces eviction from home

National pistol coach Samaresh Jung was a bewildered man within hours of landing back in India from the Paris Olympics after discovering that the house he considered his home for nearly 75 years is an "illegal construction" and he had just 48 hours to vacate it.

"This was a property we were staying on for the last 75 years," a hassled Jung told.

Delhi High Court will hear on Monday. *—PTI*



KEY EVENTS

SHOOTING 12:30 PM IST

SKEET WOMEN, QUALIFICATION DAY 1

Maheshwari Chauhan, 28, Rajasthan

Secured the bronze on Day 5 at the 7th Asian Championship Shotgun in Astana, Kazakhstan.

Raiza Dhillon, 20, Haryana

won a gold at the Asian Shotgun Championships, an Asian Olympic qualifier event on 20 January 2024 at Kuwait City.

GOLF 12:30 PM IST

MEN'S INDIVIDUAL STROKE PLAY, ROUND 3

Shubhankar Sharma, 28, Jammu Kashmir

Sharma placed third in the Bashundhara Bangladesh Open, tied for fourth in the Resorts World Manila Masters, and finished 51st in the Order of Merit.

Gaganjeet Bhullar, 36, Punjab

Bhullar finished fifth at the Kenya Open for his best result of the season.

SHOOTING 1:00 PM IST

WOMEN'S 25M PISTOL, FINALS

Manu Bhaker, 22, Jhajjar

2 times Bronze medalist will look to win the 3rd medal in the finals

ARCHERY 1:50 PM IST

WOMEN'S INDIVIDUAL, QUALIFICATION DAY 1

Deepika Kumari, 30, Ranchi

She won a gold medal at the 2010 Commonwealth Games in the women's individual recurve event

B Kaur, 18, Haryana

She won a bronze at the Youth World Championships at Limerick in 2023

SAILING 3:45 PM IST

MEN'S DINGHY

V Saravanan, 25, Tamil Nadu

He is the first Indian sailor to qualify for the Paris Olympics

SAILING 5:55 PM IST

WOMEN'S DINGHY

N Kumanan, 26, Chennai

Nethra Kumanan is the first Indian woman sailor to qualify for the Olympics and the first Indian woman to win a World Cup medal

AND THAT'S HOW ITS DONE

Turkish Olympic shooting medallist Yusuf Dikec became an overnight internet sensation after his casual style of winning silver with no headwear and a hand in his pocket

PHOTO: X/@SHANGHAIDAILY

Sports Ministry dispatches 40 ACs for Indian athletes

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

Indian athletes battling the soaring temperatures and lack of cooling in their rooms in the Paris Olympic Games Village have been provided with 40 portable air conditioners by the country's sports ministry to make their stay comfortable.

The air-conditioners were sent to the Games village after discussions with the Indian Olympic Association and the French Embassy, according to sources in the ministry.

"Taking into consideration the issues faced by athletes at the Olympic Games village because of the temperature and humidity in Paris, the Ministry of Sports decided to provide 40 ACs in the Games Village rooms where the Indian athletes are staying," the source told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

Temperatures have soared in both Paris and Chateauroux, the two main Olympic Games venues.

In the men's 50m rifle 3-positions event, all the eight finalists, including India's bronze-winner Swapnil Kusale, were seen sweating profusely at the Chateauroux shooting range. *—PTI*

Indian rower Balraj finishes 23rd in Men's Single Sculls

PARIS, 2 AUG

Indian rower Balraj Panwar ended his Paris Games campaign in 23rd position in the men's single sculls event after signing off at fifth in the Final D round here on Friday.

25-year-old from Haryanna clocked 7:02.37, his best timing of the Games, in Final D, which was not a medal round.

On Tuesday, Balraj, India's lone representative in rowing at the Paris Olympics, had finished fifth in his quarterfinals heat race.

Panwar had progressed to the quarterfinals after finishing second in his repechage round race on Sunday. He had finished fourth in his first round heat race on Saturday to make it to the repechage round.

Emily Craig and Imogen Grant won gold in the women's lightweight double sculls, while men's pair Ollie Wynne-Griffith and Tom George claimed silver after being pipped on the line by Croatia. British pair Wynne-Griffith and George in the men's pairs clinched silver in rowers.

Divers Anthony Harding and Jack Laugher added to the tally with bronze in the men's 3m synchro springboard final.

Bryony Page won gold medal in women's Trampoline at Paris Olympics Viyaleta Bardzilouskaya clinched silver medal in women's Trampoline

Meanwhile, Tamara Potocka suffered an asthma attack and collapsed after her 200m medley heat on Friday. *—BBC News/ PTI*

Indian rower Balraj Panwar ended his Paris Games campaign in 23rd position on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

Telangana to bring new sports policy, talks on with BCCI

HYDERABAD, 2 AUG

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Friday said his government would formulate a new sports policy to promote sports in a big way. The proposed policy would be debated in the next session of the Legislative Assembly, he said, appreciating the policy being followed in Haryana to encourage sportspersons. Reddy, who was speaking in the Assembly, said the state government has held preliminary talks with the BCCI on establishing an international level cricket stadium at Begari Kanche near here where the government is setting up a skill development university. The government would allocate land and the BCCI is coming forward to build the cricket stadium, he said. The government has allocated over Rs 361 crore in the budget for sports like never before, he said. *—PTI*

'NEVER LIKED TENNIS ANYWAY'

Andy Murray heads into retirement after Olympic loss

PARIS, 2 AUG

Tears welled in Andy Murray's eyes as he walked alone onto the court to wave goodbye to professional tennis, his career over after a loss in the Paris Olympics doubles quarterfinals.

The 37-year-old Murray had said the 2024 Summer Games would be his last event, and he and partner Dan Evans were beaten by the American duo of Taylor Fritz and Tommy Paul 6-2, 6-4 at Court Suzanne Lengle Thursday night.

"I knew that moment was coming for the last few months. If it didn't happen today, that was going to be in a couple days' time, and I was ready for it. Obviously, I was emotional, because it's the last time I will play a competitive match. But I am genuinely happy, just now. I'm happy with how it's finished," said Murray, a three-time Grand Slam champion and the only player in tennis history with two singles golds.

Murray won Wimbledon twice and the U.S. Open once, along with his Olympic golds from London in 2012 and Rio de Janeiro in 2016. His first Wimbledon championship, in 2013, made Murray the first man from Britain to win that trophy in 77 years.

He will be remembered forever as someone who made the most of his talent and managed to elbow his way in among the Big Three of men's tennis — Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic, who have a combined 66 Grand Slam singles trophies — to claim those three of his own. *—PTI*

Andy Murray of Britain in action during his first round doubles match against Kei Nishikori and Taro Daniel **PHOTO: PTI**

India-SL first ODI ends in dramatic tie

COLOMBO, 2 AUG

India and Sri Lanka were engaged in a thrilling tie in the first ODI of the three-match series here on Friday.

Composed fifties by Dunith Wellalage and Pathum Nissanka helped Sri Lanka reach a decent 230 for 8 after opting to bat.

The total was better than what it looked on the board due to conditions which are heavily loaded in favour of slow bowlers. Wellalage's 67 not out off 65 balls had seven fours and two sixes in it.

Nissanka made 56 off 75 balls.

Left-arm orthodox spinner Axar Patel (2/33 in 10 overs) and wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav (1/33 in 10 overs) were economical while seamers Shivam Dube, Arshdeep Singh and Mohammed Siraj also chipped in with a wicket apiece. In last 20 overs, 118 runs were scored.

Chasing, skipper Rohit Sharma made 58 off 47 balls, while Axar Patel (33) and KL Rahul (31) also chipped in with contributions but couldn't finish off the game.

Charith Asalanka (3/30) and Wanindu Hasaranga (3/58) were the pick of the bowlers for the hosts.

Brief Score:

Sri Lanka: 230 for 8 in 50 overs (Pathum Nissanka 56, Dunith Wellalage 67 not out, Axar Patel 2/33, Kuldeep Yadav 1/33).

India: 230 all out in 47.5 overs (Rohit Sharma 58; Charith Asalanka 3/30, Wanindu Hasaranga 3/58). *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI